“Tussles with ambidexterity: The case of managers of health professional education”

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Declaration

The material being presented for examination is my own work and has not been submitted for an award of this or another Higher Education Institution except in minor particulars which are explicitly noted in the body of the thesis. Where research pertaining to the thesis was undertaken collaboratively, the nature and extent of my individual contribution has been made explicit.

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Abstract

This case study explores the lived experience of managers within an academic faculty concerned with the professional education of the health care workforce in the UK. Recent advances in the global trend towards the marketisation of Higher Education and the current era of public and quasi-public-sector austerity, sees these actors tasked with practising their craft amidst a powerful set of forces which are transforming their world of work and raising opportunities and challenges in equal measure. At the heart of these challenges lies the imperative to maintain and enhance current capabilities whilst simultaneously adopting a future orientation to develop new ones. The extant literature offers powerful evidence of the efficacy of the construct of ambidexterity as a lens through which to understand the way in which organisations and individuals pursue these dual aims and provides a fitting theoretical framework for the study. The case study integrates data elicited from interviews with managers with archival documentary data, relating to a four-year period, to facilitate analysis on both an individual and business-unit level. The findings offer a novel exploration of the construct of ambidexterity in the Higher Education arena and address the plethora of calls to advance our understanding regarding managers' interpretation and responses to the tensions which arise from the pursuit of ambidexterity.

The research makes a unique contribution to the existing body of knowledge revealing a conceptualisation of contextual ambidexterity in which the dual modes of operation (exploitation and exploration) are positioned along a continuum. Context-specific ambidextrous tensions emerge, including the dichotomous perception of other educational providers as both competitors and collaborators and the enduring deleterious impact of explorative activity on exploitative endeavours. Ambidextrous tactics are also in evidence with the imperative to develop social capital with external stakeholders, who are espoused with consumer sovereignty, taking precedence in this complex educational marketplace. Together the findings afford a unique insight into the way that managers of professional healthcare education perceive and manage the complexity and dynamism of ambidexterity in their everyday practice.

Summary of Portfolio

This summary sets the thesis within the wider context of the work completed as part of the Professional Doctorate programme, offering an insight into the chosen research topic and the learning achieved throughout the doctoral journey.

My motivation to undertake doctoral-level study derives from a combination of the intrinsic motivation to advance my academic thinking, research and writing skills and my ambition to progress my career in academic leadership. I commenced the programme having spent two years as a Deputy Head of Department in a Faculty of Health and Social Care and the autobiographical focus of the "Personal & Professional Review" module afforded a valuable opportunity to review and reflect upon my career up to this point. I was able to critically explore the influence that local, national and international external forces had on my field of practice. Here the marketisation and commercialisation of Higher Education was found to have inspired many of the personal and professional tensions I had experienced.

The "Practitioner Enquiry at Doctoral Level" module then enabled me to immerse myself in the organisational theory literature to consider how this might inform an understanding of the health and social care educational landscape. This facilitated the development of a research proposal which utilises ambidexterity as the theoretical framework within which to explore health care educational managers' experience of the commodification of education.

Throughout the programme I have actively engaged in the research community of the University. This has been of significant benefit, affording me the opportunity to develop an informal dialogue with research-active professionals and to present my work formally during its progression. The feedback derived from these experiences facilitated me to refine the methodology and hone my ability to articulate my research findings.

1 Chapter 1 - Introduction

During my time as a doctoral student I progressed from the position of Deputy Head to Head of an academic department in a Faculty of Health and Social Care. My professional practice incorporates the line management of a team of academic staff and the operational management of a suite of educational programmes and related projects. Over the same period the educational landscape has undergone significant transformations, the most notable of which is the marketisation of healthcare education. To meet the challenge of protecting and growing our market share in this increasingly competitive arena, the managerial team need to maintain and incrementally enhance the quality of our educational offering while also ensuring our future viability by developing new provision to meet the evolving needs of the healthcare workforce. Yet, my experience suggests that this inspires multiple tensions as an overemphasis on growth threatens to impact negatively on the quality of existing provision while a failure to adapt and evolve imperils our future viability. Thus, my reading of the ambidexterity literature resonated with the challenges I faced in my professional practice and inspired the construction of this empirical study, which seeks to investigate how ambidexterity is experienced by managers of professional healthcare education.

1.1 The practice issues

This study is situated in the dynamic and rapidly evolving landscape of the UK Higher Education system. Global social, political and economic conditions are universally recognised as powerful influential drivers of social transformation and recent years have witnessed the totalitarian grand narrative of capitalism radically alter the relationship between Higher Education and the state (Brown, 2015; Ritzer, 1993; Readings, 1996). The UK Higher Education arena is diverse, and it is therefore little surprise that this transformational process is having a differential effect across the sector. As such, this chapter explores the social, professional and political factors which are exerting influence on

faculties of healthcare education and provides a context for an empirical investigation into the experiences of managers navigating these turbulent waters.

Contemporary universities constantly change in response to the wider global environment, with political reforms acting as principal drivers of the evolutionary process. Since the 1980's successive UK governments have adopted reduced-state neo-liberal policies with the laudable aim of expanding Higher Education provision to the masses via a process of gradual deregulation (Clough & Bagley, 2015; Vallmaa, 2014; Taberner, 2018). Having increased engagement in Higher Education, amongst 18 to 45-year olds, by 6% in the course of a decade, the political rhetoric shifted to focus on the affordability of state funded mass Higher Education (Brown, 2015). This formed the central impetus behind the Government White Paper, 'Students at the heart of the system' (Department for Business Innovation and Skills [BIS], 2011: a), which sought to address the financial burden of Higher Education by radically reforming the sector to align with a market-facing agenda.

Drawing on neo-classical economics to pass the fiscal responsibility to the student, as the consumer, and the university as provider (Grey, 2013; Mautner, 2005; Docherty, 2015), these far reaching reforms reflect the worldwide trend towards a free-market or corporate-business perspective (Holmwood, 2014). Thus, the marketisation discourse can be seen to reconceptualise knowledge as a product, a means to an end rather than an end-in-itself, which many commentators argue fails to recognise the intellectual and cultural capital it proffers both for the individual and the wider community (Chessum, 2010; Williams, 2011; Ward, 2012; Docherty, 2015). Some educationalists perceive this as a means of social engineering which they decry for commodifying education, debasing and diminishing it into an article of commerce (Williams, 2011; Ward, 2012; Tabener, 2018; Wall & Perrin, 2015; Wall, 2016) with interventionism employed to further corporate interests (Van Horn & Mirowski, & Stapleford, 2011). Yet the contention that this market rationality will taper the utilitarian benefits of education is hotly contested by its advocates who assert that any contribution to wider economic growth also contributes to the general wellbeing of the broader society (Clarke, 2007;

Universities UK, 2010; CBI Higher Education Task Force, 2009). Support for this claim can be found in the economic ideology of Adam Smith (first published 1901, reprinted 2011). Smith presents the notion of the "invisible hand" in which societal advancement is increased as an unintended outcome of individuals' efforts to pursue their own interests at a greater rate than if their actions were motivated towards the greater good.

While the 'marketisation' discourse implies that universities have historically operated in a market-free vacuum, one need only consider the bureaucratic distribution model which drives the competitive arena of the Research Excellence Framework to see that all of these factors preceded the current reforms. Thus, it is clear that Higher Education always did, and indeed always will, operate under some influence of market forces. Therefore, the pivotal issue is the way in which the exchange of goods or services find form in the reformed system, commonly expressed as the extent to which the market is "free" (Mautner, 2005).

There is little doubt that the marketisation of Higher Education intensifies the economic pressure on contemporary universities who are engaged in a process of adaption in which their organisational infrastructures, culture and practices are evolving to become increasingly market-orientated to meet the diverse needs of multiple stakeholders (Universities UK, 2010). These pervasive reforms are presented as a means of assuring the sustainability of educational opportunities for future generations as well as driving quality enhancement, empowering students and bringing more money into the sector (BIS, 2011: a). Given the massification of Higher Education in the UK, the need for change finds broad acceptance in the literature; however, there is widespread discord and debate regarding the assertion that marketisation is an appropriate vehicle by which to achieve these ambitions and a language of 'crisis' is a pervasive feature of the prose (Taberner, 2018).

As previously mentioned, these reforms reconceptualise the role of the student aligning it with that of a consumer. Collective consumer sovereignty is then portrayed as a compelling force in shaping future provision, propelling the best providers to succeed and grow and the weakest to fail and die

(Collini, 2012; Giroux, 2014). Supporters of the libertarian ideology contend that this effectively raises the status of the student and ensures that Higher Education establishments are accountable for meeting consumer needs. Yet Sharrock (2000) illustrates the challenge of this construct in his assertion that students are at once consumers, citizens (with rights and responsibilities), subjects (with wider obligations) and clients (in need of guidance, instruction and education). As such, the contract between students and the universities is far more complex than that of supplier and customer. Furthermore, graduates accumulate a significant financial burden as a result of engaging with the market and this gives rise to the widespread criticism regarding the emancipatory potential of market forces (Jeleniewski Seidler, 2012; Chessum, 2010; Carasso, Ertl, & Holmes, 2012). Ward's (2012) assertion that the fees cap will act to deter those from disadvantaged backgrounds from engaging with Higher Education is lent support by a recent MORI poll. This poll identified a rise in financial concerns amongst young people and identified a steady decline in the number of 11 to 16-year olds aspiring to attend Higher Education since the introduction of the £9,000 annual fees (Cullinane, 2017). Further, the decentralisation of power and control which are a defining feature of the market, has thus far failed to liberate the Higher Education sector (Smyth, 2017). Rather, many contemporary scholars argue that state-funded education afforded universities a degree of autonomy diminished in an era in which they must conform to the "values, constraints and priorities of economic and political forces associated with neoliberalism" (Beattie, 2017: p. 11) if they wish to engage in a marketplace designed and controlled by the state.

Although student fees and research funding remain the principle means of generating income within the sector, the marketisation of Higher Education has amplified the importance of the "third-stream agenda" both for prosperity, future growth and survival (Derec, Hall & Hua, 2012; Kitagawa, 2017; Universities UK, 2010; Lockett, Wright, & Wild, 2013). Numerous policy pronouncements have actively encouraged the growth of the third-stream agenda in the UK (Lambert Review, 2003; BIS, 2011: b) and act as powerful drivers propelling universities to adopt entrepreneurial initiatives aimed at developing new and innovative means of income generation. The CBI Higher Education Task Force (2009) built

on The Lambert Review (2003) to call for greater collaboration between universities and industry with financial incentives available for partnership initiatives between universities and Small to Medium Enterprises (SME's) and a growing emphasis on the imperative for knowledge-transfer from empirical endeavours to the wider community (BISb, 2011; Bonner, Hewit-Dundass, & Roper, 2015).

Parallel to this is an increased emphasis on the vocational orientation of educational provision to develop graduates equipped with the demonstrable skills vital to the economic success of industries and business (Universities UK, 2010; Moore & Morton, 2015; Barnett, 2000; BIS, 2016). Indeed, the recent Green Paper "Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellence, social mobility and student choice" (BIS, 2015: b) seeks to further align Higher Education with corporate ideals. In addition, the Higher Education and Research Act (2017) introduced the Office for Students (OfS), with a strategic imperative to ensure Higher Education offers value for money by opening up the market and removing obstacles for new for-profit providers to enter and apply for degree awarding powers as well as extended apprenticeship provision to degree and higher degree level. Thus, the marketisation agenda can be seen to have inspired what Barnett (2000) coins "an age of supercomplexity" (p. 409) permeating every aspect of the academy and motivating institutions to explore new markets and develop innovative curricular as a means of securing or growing their market share.

Yet universities cannot afford to neglect their existing income base as the free market economy is also dependent upon the availability of reliable information to inform consumer choice and this has given rise to an audit culture in which key information sets, National Student Survey [NSS] data, Research Excellence Framework [REF], league tables and results' profiles take centre stage. Indeed, the importance of quality data is further accentuated by the implementation of the Teaching Excellence Framework [TEF] which seeks to impose an association between an institution's evidence of teaching excellence and the tuition fees they can charge (BIS, 2016). Together this underlies the requisite for universities to exploit their existing capabilities by developing strategies to enrich the student

experience and engage in quality enhancing initiatives as a central means of competing in this increasingly hypercompetitive market.

Faculties concerned with the education of the caring professions have several defining features that distinguish them from the wider academic community. Most notably a significant proportion of their curricular falls under the auspices of regulatory bodies. Comprehensive standards and regulations inform the content and pedagogy of each programme challenging programme teams to balance the sometimes-conflicting demands of the university and the professional regulator and threatening to stifle creative thinking. Thus, for those engaged in health professional education the drive to enhance the vocational focus of Higher Education is of little threat as the utilitarian, instrumentalist ideology underpinning this field of curricular establishes a clear relationship between the academic and clinical communities. Indeed, the newly devised Nursing and Midwifery Council [NMC] Standards of proficiency for registered nurses (2018) place an increased emphasis on resource-intensive clinical skills and simulation, evidencing the intrinsic relationship between the evolution of the healthcare workforce and university education in this field. Yet, the wider aspects of the marketisation ethos do bestow significant potential to fundamentally alter the context of health care education. Prior to 2017, faculties of healthcare education enjoyed significant protection from the marketisation process as a result of the commissioning framework which saw regional Health Education boards commission programmes of professional health education. However, this study takes place during a time of considerable uncertainty with regard to the future of preparation programmes for the healthcare professions with the funding mechanism in England undergoing a process of radical transformation.

In November 2015, The Chancellor of the Exchequer announced the cessation of bursaries and financial support for students on programmes of healthcare education, with tuition fees and student loans to be introduced from September 2017. While many are sceptical that these changes owe more to the fact that they stand to save the Exchequer approximately £800 million per year the Council of Deans cautiously offered its support (Campbell, 2015). Evidence of an impending workforce crisis,

coupled with data which indicated that programmes of education for health professionals attracted significantly more applicants that the system could accommodate (Royal College of Nursing, [RCN], 2015) offered a compelling rationale for reform (Department of Health, 2014; Health Education England, 2015). Marketisation of the system was depicted as a viable means by which to effectively lift the cap on student numbers. However, any increase in student numbers is entirely dependent upon universities successfully attracting applicants willing and able to adopt the role of consumer and take on the fiscal responsibility for their education. Worryingly, early indications suggest that 2017 entrants dropped slightly with a notable decline in mature applicants and a 40% increase in the number of students accepted through clearing (Maguire, 2018) which suggests that universities are having to work harder to maintain existing student numbers rather than achieving the increased numbers desired.

As the Green Paper "Fulfilling our potential: teaching excellent, social mobility and student choice" (BIS, 2015: b) reaches full implementation this may also have a significant impact on faculties concerned with the education of health professionals. Most notably, private organisations and the National Health Service trusts may seek degree awarding powers to enable them to meet the educational needs of their own workforce. In addition, it is anticipated that the introduction of higher apprenticeships will facilitate alternative pedagogical models with an increased emphasis on experiential learning. All of the above factors may expand the market for health care education and erode the monopoly universities historically enjoyed. At the same time, new healthcare roles, such as the Nursing Associate, are emerging to fill perceived gaps in the existing workforce (NHS England, 2016; Cavendish, 2013). As such, faculty managers are charged with deciding whether to engage in explorative endeavours to compete for a market share in this area of provision.

Winter (2009) reflects the widely held perception that amidst this changing landscape of Higher Education the role and identity of the academic is being revised and reframed "around an idealised image of corporate efficiency and a strong managerial culture" (p. 121). The shift towards economic

priorities and consumer sovereignty is depicted as enforcing an intense pressure to perform and creating tensions within the conceptualisation of the academic professional identity (Collyer, 2014; Boyd & Smith, 2016; Gonzales, Martinez, & Ordu, 2014; Gabriel, 2010; Billot, 2010; Henkel, 2012; Winter and O'Donohue, 2012), with some going so far as to suggest can be "perceived as in crisis" (Delanty, 2008; p. 126). Here, Taberner (2018) makes a unique contribution offering findings from an inductive study that not only identifies the deleterious impact of marketisation on the role of academic staff but also suggests that this may be felt most acutely in post-1992 universities. Thus, the literature can be seen to portray a narrative of loss, lamenting the demise of academic freedom and decrying an increasingly polarised and diversified academic identity (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013).

This leads many commentators to infer that a deep-seated antipathy towards the market ethos is creating a dissonance between the traditional values and culture of the academic and the concepts of business enterprise and marketing (Billot, 2010; Taberner, 2018). Campbell and Dealtry (2003) assert that this is influencing leadership, governance and management across the academy. Specifically, the classical management theories and organisational paradigms of public administration, dominant since the post-war period, attracted widespread criticism. Here centralised control and hierarchical structures are depicted as eroding accountability leading to widespread inefficiency in service provision (Bryson, Crosby & Bloomberg, 2014, Gray & Jenkins, 2006). Thus, the welfare culture, which had proved valuable in the past, is depicted as incapable of providing effective and efficient frameworks for the cultural and structural adjustment necessary in an increasingly competitive business environment (Narayan, Olesen & Ramachandra, 2012). This inspired a rise in an enterprise culture incorporating "New Public Management" or "New Managerialism".

These social constructs find widespread utility and are used to denote the language and behaviours utilised by previously public-sector institutions adopting strategies traditionally employed in the business world, as a means of competing and surviving in this changing environment (Peters, 2013). Emerging aspects of the managerial role call on those positioned between senior management and

the academic heartland to exhibit radically different and new attitudes, skills and behaviours. The evidence indicates that in order to practice their craft amidst this dynamic and challenging landscape many academic managers have internalised corporate values and practices and/or developed hybrid identities (Winter, 2009). Bolden et al (2012) suggest that this presents a challenge to those employed in formal managerial positions within academia, in so far as attempts to further institutional (corporate) aims and objectives may face resistance with many academics looking to their peers, rather than their line managers, for leadership. Indeed, Winter (2009) describes an identity-schism in Higher Education distinguishing between academic managers, portrayed as having internalised values which reflect the corporate aspirations, and managed academics who value self-regulation and collegiality. Here, managers are depicted as walking a tightrope to foster managerial values whilst respecting the normative values of the academic community. Embracing reflexivity and debate and accepting multiple identities are heralded as the central means by which this might best be achieved (Boden et al, 2012). Further Jameson's (2012) study suggests that a dichotomy between the ideologies and values of the academic community and managerial personnel are manifested in an erosion in the trust between the two groups, which poses a significant barrier in enabling academics to manage the growing complexity of their work lives.

Middle managers, such as Heads of Department, are widely considered to occupy a critical position from which to influence the academic community and are tasked with bridging the schism in academic identities in order to "synthesise academic and business agendas" (Whitchurch, 2006: p. 167). Strategic leadership, flexibility and change management are amongst the capabilities that may confer success in this regard (Drew, 2010).

Thus, it is clear that what Bradwell (2009) described as "a neutral zone – a time of maximum uncertainty and a time for creative possibility between the ending of the way things have been and the beginning of the way they will be" (p. 63), in reference to the wider Higher Education sector in 2009, may offer an accurate depiction of the current arena of healthcare education. In recent years,

those engaged in the education of healthcare professionals have been afforded some protection against the disruptive potential of the marketisation agenda; however, the coming years will see faculties of health care face significant challenges mirroring those of the wider academy. They will be tasked with competing in an increasingly diverse marketplace to attract students and exploit their current market position whilst also developing educational opportunities which are responsive to service needs and support the healthcare workforce to meet the considerable demands they face. Hence, the future success of faculties of professional healthcare education can be seen to depend upon their ability to balance the competing imperatives of exploiting their existing capabilities whilst simultaneously exploring new and potentially fruitful avenues of endeavour. This challenge of balancing dual strategic aims is not unique to the educational arena. Rather, it reflects the escalating pressure to balance the acts of innovation and efficiency across all business sectors (Turner, Swart, & Maylor, 2013) which has given rise to the use of the term "ambidexterity" to denote the ability to pursue two different paths simultaneously (Gupta, Smith, & Shalley, 2006; Cao, Simsek, & Zhang, 2010). As such, Chapter 2 will explore the scholarly debate and literature which has evolved in response to the need to better understand how organisations can foster ambidexterity as a means of navigating the potentially harsh winds of market forces.

With the burgeoning marketisation of the sector, the commodification of education, the growth of a consumerist ethos and a need to win the hearts and minds of the academic heartlands, academic managers are grappling with the increased complexity of their roles in an era which stands witness to the corporatisation of the academy. Thus, there is a need to move the debate on from the dichotomous positions of social libertarian and neoclassical ideologies towards a system which secures a balance between self and collective interests and facilitates both academic and commercial success. By engaging in the discourse and learning from those who have gone before us, managers in faculties of healthcare education have the greatest chance of evolving professionally and exerting influence upon the future shape of educational provision while staying true to their values and practising their craft in the new world order.

1.2 Research aim

The aim of this study is to investigate how ambidexterity is experienced by managers of professional healthcare education, balancing the dual imperatives of maintaining and enhancing current capabilities whilst simultaneously adopting a future orientation to develop new ones.

1.3 Research questions

The research study will explore the following research question and related sub questions:

Research question: How is ambidexterity experienced by managers of healthcare professional education?

Sub-research question 1: How are exploitation and exploration experienced, at management level, in professional health education?

Sub-research question 2: What tensions arise in the pursuit of ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?

Sub–research question 3: What are the enablers and barriers to ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?

1.4 Research objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows;

1. To make a valuable contribution towards our current understanding of the concept of ambidexterity within the context of Higher Education.
2. To gain a rich, detailed understanding of the lived experience of those engaged in managing professional health education during the current era of marketisation.

3. To identify those factors which facilitate or hamper ambidexterity, which is posited as a vital component of success in contemporary managerial practice.

4. To utilise the findings to inform managerial practice within my own organisation and disseminate them to regional, national and international audiences.

1.5 Research design

Given that the focus of this study is on lived experience and individual perceptions it is well suited to the inductive, interpretative research paradigm that is concerned with finding answers to questions about social experiences and the meaning individuals attribute to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The ontological stance is that of social constructionism, which views knowledge as constructed as opposed to created and which also rejects the relativist perspective (Andrews, 2012). This qualitative case study utilises a combination of semi-structured interviews and documentary data. The subjective, rich nature of the data generated (Bryman, 2012; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002) facilitates an understanding of the experiences and views of educational managers and identifies those factors which have acted to facilitate or obstruct them in enacting 'ambidexterity' in this case.

1.6 The structure of this thesis

This section summarises the content of each chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 offers a review of the literature which consider ambidexterity, documenting its development and exploring the theoretical assumptions which underpin its conceptualisation. Attention is also afforded to the empirical body of evidence regarding its efficacy and how it might be cultivated, before considering its potential utility for the managerial practice of the academy.

Chapter 3

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this research study and provides a rationale for the methodological decisions made.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 presents the findings resulting from the analysis of interview and documentary data regarding this case study and data extracts are used to illustrate each theme.

Chapter 5

This chapter draws the themes together along with the ambidexterity literature to develop discussions and reach conclusions from the findings.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 outlines the unique contribution this study offers to our existing knowledge in the field of ambidexterity and academic managerial practice and makes recommendations for future practice and research.

1.7 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a brief outline of the study and explored the wider educational context as a means of illustrating its significance and relevance for the professional practice of managers of healthcare education.

2 Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The marketisation of Higher Education necessitates both cultural and organisational change and bestows upon those in managerial positions a need to develop commercial competencies, skill sets and ways of working. For managers' in faculties of healthcare, the central challenge lies in the need to maintain and enhance their existing provision and services to succeed in an increasingly competitive business environment, while also ensuring their relevance to the evolving needs of the healthcare workforce by responding to new business opportunities vital for their future survival. Sarkees and Hulland (2009) and Zhang, Edgar, Geare and O'Kane (2016) are amongst many commentators to identify that finding a balance between the need to maintain and enhance existing activity and develop new activity is a central challenge of the corporation and that many organisations overemphasise one or the other to their detriment. Duncan (1976) coined the term "ambidexterity" to describe the organisational ability to balance the managerial contradictions of monopolising existing competencies and developing new ones. This accurately reflects the challenge facing academic managers in this field and, as such, the construct of ambidexterity can be seen to offer a valuable theoretical lens through which to explore the experience of managers of healthcare education.

Thus, the following chapter aims to review the extant literature which seeks to offer a conceptual clarification of ambidexterity, explores its efficacy, investigates how it is enacted in managerial practice and considers its application to the Higher Education arena.

2.2 Ambidexterity: Concept clarification

Ambidexterity is not a new concept and was first introduced to the arena of business management in the seminal work of Duncan in 1976, who built upon the findings of Burns and Stalkers (1961) that show organisational success in different market conditions is reliant upon different structural approaches. Contemporary society is characterised by a rapid acceleration in the pace of change and, as such, it is little surprise that it is against this backdrop that the concept has risen to prominence.

While the central tenet of the concept of ambidexterity is the ability to pursue two different paths simultaneously it continues to defy definition and has been applied to incremental and revolutionary change (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996), adaptability and alignment (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004), efficiency and flexibility (Yu, Gudergan & Chen, 2018) and running the business and changing the business (Nieto-Rodrigiguez, 2014). It has also been used as a theoretical lens through which to explore a diverse range of organisational phenomena including resilience (Stokes et al, 2018), ecological responsiveness (Thambusamy & Salam, 2010) and motivation (Parker, 2014). This has led many to comment that such divergent uses threaten to blur its meaning and impede its utility (Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Yet it is March's (1991) use of the term's exploitation, the ability to enhance existing capabilities and exploration, the ability to create new knowledge and develop new opportunities, which has gained traction amongst contemporary scholars. March (1991) suggests that ambidexterity represents a fundamental challenge for corporations in so far as "the basic problem confronting an organisation is to engage in sufficient exploitation to ensure its current validity and, at the same time, devote enough energy to exploration to ensure its future validity" (p. 105). Thus, ambidexterity is seen as a managerial capability rather than an activity (Turner et al, 2013) and affords a valuable means of exploring the macro and micro-dynamics of contemporary Higher Educational organisational management.

Theorists seeking to explore the concept commonly start by examining the nature of the two modes of engagement from which it is constituted. Here, exploitation is depicted as the less risky of the two

paradigms having a focus on incremental changes to create maximum yields for existing competencies. This supports Govindarajan & Timble's (2010) contention that exploitation is the dominant mode of operation for many organisations who strive for short-term success based on well-established and reliable revenue streams. Conversely exploration is portrayed as high-risk requiring, as it does, significant investment for uncertain returns in new areas of engagement (Lauria, 2015).

Considerable academic debate has focused on a concept clarification of ambidexterity and this has given rise to three distinct approaches described as *temporal* (or sequential), *structural* and *contextual* ambidexterity. Early scholars focused on temporal ambidexterity, based on Duncan's original model in which organisations were depicted as aligning their internal strategies to enable them to switch their focus between exploitative and explorative activities over time. This may prove appropriate at the project-level (Chen, 2017) and in stable market environments. However, Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) argue that in rapidly changing environments the inherent inflexibility of such approaches renders them ineffective.

Tushman and O'Reilly (1996) contend that to be truly ambidextrous modern-day organisations need the ability to simultaneously exploit and explore. They go on to extol the use of structural means to align the competing demands via dual architectures and roles (structural ambidexterity), each concurrently focusing on either exploitation or exploration. Patel, Messersmith and Lepak (2013) and O'Rielly and Tushman (2004, 2011) point out that structural ambidexterity is heavily reliant upon effective leadership, as it is often the responsibility of the senior management team to integrate efforts and reconcile the exploitative and explorative endeavours of the organisation to ensure that they align to the overall strategy. The organisational management literature stands testament to the application of this construct in practice by reflecting the predominance of structural approaches to organisational ambidexterity (Jansen, George, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2009; Jansen, Simsek, & Cao, 2012; Pellegrinelli, Murray-Webster & Turner, 2015).

Both temporal and structural ambidexterity share a focus on the separation of exploitation and exploration and can be seen to ascribe to the widely held view that they are conflicting modes of operation, which call on different skill sets and compete for scarce time and resources (Gupta et al, 2006; March, 1991). This is described by Hughes (2018) as the trade-off.

Conversely, since its inception, an important evolutionary change has occurred in the way in which the concept of ambidexterity is interpreted, giving rise to the third approach which is described as contextual ambidexterity. First proposed by Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004), contextual ambidexterity focuses on the individual rather than the organisation and can be seen to offer a radically different conceptualisation. Defined as "the behavioural capacity to simultaneously demonstrate alignment and adaptability across an entire business unit" (p. 209) contextual ambidexterity is depicted as an organisational culture which "encourages individuals to make their own judgements as to how to best divide their time between the conflicting demands for alignment and adaptability" (p. 211).

The theoretical literature also commonly presents the various types of ambidexterity as mutually exclusive which belies the multifaceted nature of this complex construct (Kauppila, 2010; Turner & Lee-O'Kelley, 2012; Turner et al, 2013). Yet Turner et al's (2013) qualitative case study indicates that multiple forms of ambidexterity can exist simultaneously. Chen (2017) concurs and proposes a fourth type of ambidexterity which he expresses as "dynamic ambidexterity" (p. 385). Here, a combination of structural ambidexterity at the corporate-level, contextual ambidexterity at the business-unit-level and sequential ambidexterity at the project-level are presented as a means of precluding the limitations of each type of ambidexterity to facilitate an organisation's ability to simultaneously explore and exploit.

Exploration and exploitation are commonly depicted as arousing tensions, which are presented as causing a significant challenge for both organisations and individuals. Berghman (2012) suggests that these tensions arise because of the hybrid nature of ambidexterity which inspires "conflicting demands in terms of resources, organisation, and strategic focus of exploitation and exploration

activities" (p. 3). Danson and Kierulf's (2016) findings, derived from their qualitative investigation into a Swedish bank, suggest that the tensions which lie between short and long-term vision, predictability and uncertainty, and efficiency and flexibility, are the most significant for organisations striving for contextual ambidexterity. Raisch, Birkinshaw, Probst and Tushman (2009) concur in so far as the two modes of operation are depicted as pulling the organisation in different directions. However, they identify additional foci of ambidextrous tensions; differentiation and integration, individual and organisational interests, and internality and externality. The tensions, which emanate from this ambidextrous dichotomy, are commonly depicted to be nested throughout the organisation. This inspires many scholars to call for methodological designs that explore ambidexterity across multiple organisational levels (Raisch et al, 2009; Turner et al, 2013).

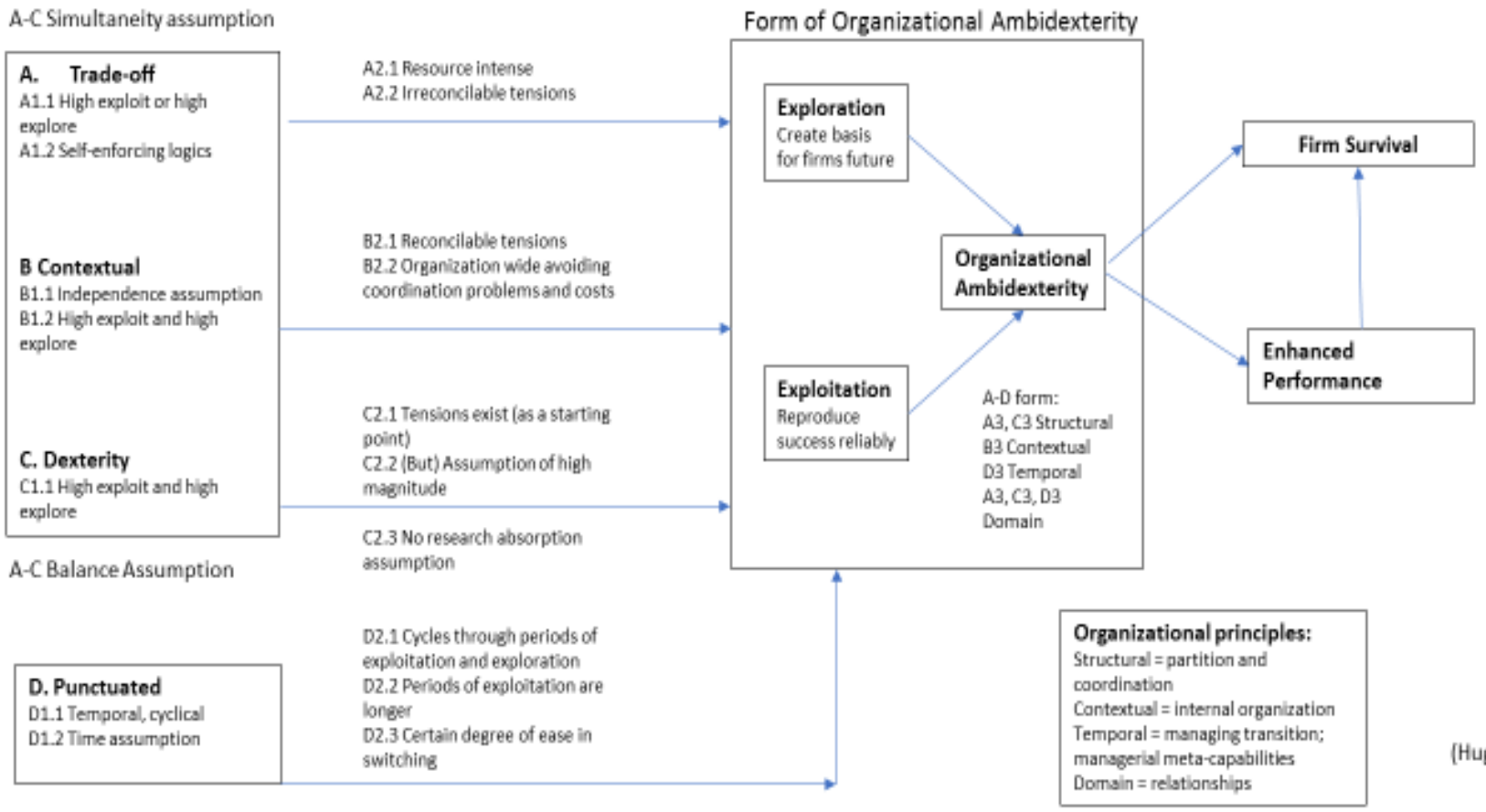
Stokes, Moore, Moss, Mathews, Smith and Lui (2015) offer a unique contribution to address this empirical gap in their exploration of the lived experience of negotiating "the transformatory journey involved for the individual in moving across the exploitative and explorative boundary" (p. 16). Their study uses an ethnographic approach to aptly portray the individual challenges involved in adapting to work in an increasingly explorative organisational culture and goes some way to illustrating the many tensions nested throughout an organisation seeking to become ambidextrous. Burgess, Strauss, Currie and Wood's (2015) multi-domain analysis of contextual ambidexterity also affords support to the assertion that ambidexterity is nested throughout organisations. Their exploration of the much-neglected public domain considers contextual ambidexterity within a UK hospital and offers methodological insights into the best means of investigating ambidexterity across multiple levels of the organisation. However, their interpretation of ambidexterity i.e. as the ability of professionals to maintain and enhance current care provision and adapt care in line with the emerging evidence base, jars with its use in the wider corporate context.

Despite the frequent assertion that ambidexterity incorporates two very different modes of operation, some researchers have gone as far as to suggest that exploitation and exploration can be

complementary. Andriopoulos and Lewis (2010) investigated seven leading product design companies in the USA and found that balancing exploitation and exploration can fuel as well as frustrate innovation. Here, exploration and exploitation were found to be paradoxical rather than oppositional and by embracing the paradox the organisation derived exploitative gains from explorative endeavours and vice versa.

The literature can thus be seen to offer multiple conceptualisations of ambidexterity underpinned by discreetly different theoretical assumptions. Hughes (2018) makes an important distinction between synchronicity and simultaneity, the former assumes that exploration and exploitation exist but do not operate at the same time, while the latter assumes that both can be enacted together. Numerous theoretical models of ambidexterity are advanced in the literature; however, Hughes (2018) is alone in incorporating its multiple conceptualisations alongside the ambidextrous tensions which permeate this body of literature and as such is considered the most comprehensive conceptual model to date.

Figure 1: Conceptual model containing the theoretical assumptions of Organizational Ambidexterity Theory



(Hughes, 2018)

2.3 Ambidexterity: Strategic and contemporary significance

There is a plethora of evidence to support the contention that the capacity for ambidexterity is positively correlated with organisational success (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013; Pertusa-Ortega & Molina-Azorin, 2018) including sales growth (Karhu & Schlegelmilch, 2016), organisational growth (Geerts, Blindenach-Drissen & Gemmel, 2010) and longevity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011). Yet a meta-analysis by Junni, Sarala, Taras and Tarba (2013) suggests that ambidexterity does not afford equal benefit to all sectors of industry, with technology firms reaping greater rewards than their manufacturing counterparts. This may go some way to advancing our understanding of why a minority of studies (Van Looy, Martens & Debackere, 2005; Vrontis, Thrassou, Santoro, & Papa, 2017) have failed to identify a relationship between ambidexterity and performance and this illustrates the need for more research to consider the exact conditions in which ambidextrous organisations prosper. Here, a key finding is offered by the work of Uotila et al (2008) who contend that 80% of companies fall below the recommended level of exploration and suggest that a predominant focus on exploitation may be widespread. Conversely, Groysberg and Lee's (2009) findings suggest that the success of staff employed in exploitative roles far outweighs their explorative counterparts, affording support for the adoption of an exploitative priority in some industries.

Recent studies by Kriz, Voola and Yuksel (2014) and Wei, Zhao and Zhang (2014) extend our understanding of the impact of market conditions on the relationship between ambidexterity and performance. Kriz et al (2014) offer findings which suggest that the degree of competition in the market acts to mediate the impact of ambidexterity, which is found to be increasingly beneficial in hypercompetitive market conditions. This implies that adapting ambidextrous capabilities will be increasingly important as the market in education for healthcare professionals becomes progressively more competitive. Wei et al (2014) also indicate that market orientation may be of relevance and draw on data from 203 Chinese firms to suggest that exploitation has a positive effect for firms with a proactive market orientation, while there is a delay in realising returns from explorative activities.

Herein lies a central challenge for managers within Higher Education whose performance is predominantly measured via audit mechanisms such recruitment, retention, revenue, NSS, TEF and REF data, all of which share a focus on past and current exploitative endeavours. In Higher Education, the exploitative priority is further augmented by the predominance of organisational systems and mechanistic structures in which the availability of staffing and resources are aligned with current commitments with little or no additional resource available to commit to potentially lucrative exploration. Thus, it may those universities which strive to achieve entrepreneurialism for whom the development of ambidexterity is most imperative. Numerous factors, both internal and external to the organisation, influence the appropriate balance between exploitation and exploration and the efficacy of ambidexterity, which necessitates careful consideration regarding its worth to the UK Higher Education sector.

Calls for further empirical endeavours which enhance our understanding of this multifaceted and complex phenomenon across multiple organisational levels, are a prominent feature of the ambidexterity literature (Turner et al, 2013; Reisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). Recommendations for further study in this are also commonly advocate a broadening of the methodological lens (Junni et al, 2013), alongside the need to explore ambidexterity in a wide range of organisational settings (Turner et al, 2013; O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). To date investigative efforts have focused on a diverse range of organisations but few have considered ambidexterity in the context of the quasi-public sector, less still universities (Stokes et al, 2015). Conversely, the concept of entrepreneurship has been enthusiastically applied to the management of Higher Education (Clark, 2015; Etzkowitz, 2016 Slaughter & Leslie, 2004; Kalar & Antoncic, 2015; Barrow, 2018) with overtones of enterprise and innovation which have striking parallels with the explorative arm of ambidexterity. Birds (2014) depiction of the role of the academic entrepreneurial manager as the bridge which enables some to cross the divide between the opposing requirement to exploit current competencies and markets, whilst adapting to a changing external environment illustrates this point and her findings make a tentative case for efficacy of an ambidextrous model in this context.

While the literature does little to illuminate what benefits Higher Education establishments stand to gain by fostering ambidexterity there is some empirical evidence of its efficacy in this organisational context. Nguyen, Yu, Melewar and Hemsley-Brown (2016) attended to ambidextrous approaches to marketing in Chinese universities to identify a positive association between ambidextrous marketing, exploiting existing provision and exploring new areas of education, and improved brand image and reputation. Drawing on the findings of a quantitative survey to identify that students' decision making to study at a given university was informed by evidence of ambidexterity in the branding strategy. Unfortunately, the sample focused solely on students who had already enrolled at the university and, as such, is limited by the failure to incorporate the views of those who made alternative choices.

Coleman (2016) is alone in applying the ambidextrous construct to educational leadership. Her study adopts a qualitative methodology to explore the experiences of online learning unit leaders. The contention that open leadership behaviours foster exploration, while closed leadership behaviours inspire exploitation, are corroborated and support the case for the utility of an ambidextrous model in an educational context. However, ambidextrous leadership was not evidenced amongst all the participants implying the presence of significant variation in the ambidextrous capability of the academic workforce. It is interesting to note that, in stark contrast to the wider body of literature, Coleman's (2016) findings include little reference to the tensions between exploitation and exploration. This may, in part, derive from her application of the ambidextrous model to a largely uncontroversial aspect of educational practice, i.e. the necessity to maintain the quality of the educational offering (exploitation) whilst fostering pedagogical creativity and innovation (exploration). It is also important to note that Coleman's (2016) work was carried out in the USA, where education has long conformed to a corporate ethos and this may limit its transferability to the UK educational arena.

Tahar et al (2011) and Fatemeh Jahangir and Fatemeh's (2014) both utilised single university case studies to explore ambidexterity in this sector. Akin to the wider body of literature in this field (Tahar

et al, 2011; Fatemeh et al, 2014; Coleman, 2016; Chang, Yang & Chen, 2009) they support the proposition that universities can be seen as ambidextrous. However, neither consider the efficacy of the construct, the extent to which it is nested throughout the organisation or offer any illumination regarding the lived experience of those working to balance the explorative and exploitative efforts in this organisational context. Yet, Stokes, Moore, Smith, Larson and Brindley (2017) offer a novel multiple case study which does suggest that a failure to manage the ambidextrous tensions may have a deleterious impact on universities. Their exploration considers the juxtaposition of an established London-based university, depicted as an Advanced Market Economy (AME), and two of their private Higher Education collaborative partners, Emerging Market Economies (EME's). They identify significant tensions arising when the predominantly exploitative structures, processes and culture of the university contrast with the highly explorative culture of the private for-profit organisations. Each party was portrayed as suffering from a degree of ethnocentric goal myopia, focusing on their own rationale for engaging in the collaboration to the exclusion of the consequences for the other party. As a result, tensions arose in relation to differing attitudes to regulatory frameworks, which posed a reputational risk for the AME, coupled with mismatched resources and unfulfilled expectations for all parties. Although the transferability of these findings is limited by the methodological design once again they identify ambidextrous tensions of specific relevance for this sector. They also suggest that even those Higher Education establishments open to what Stokes et al (2017) call the "explorative pull" (p. 342) afford precedence to their reputation and the well-established exploitative priorities of the quality assurance framework.

The literature also includes a discrete body of evidence which suggests that contemporary universities are faced with competing pressures to facilitate researchers to attain both academic and commercial research outputs which is necessitating ambidextrous practice amongst researchers. Research excellence is recognised as a critical asset in terms of economic growth and social wellbeing (BIS, 2014) and funding bodies are increasingly concerned with the impact of empirical endeavours upon the wider economic community. Yet the commercialisation of academic research is widely recognised as

challenging owing to divergent goals and agendas as well as conflicting cultural perspectives regarding ownership and disclosure of findings (West, 2008: b; Ambros, Makela, Birkinshaw, & D'Este, 2008). While universities seek to encourage full disclosure and dissemination, and academic reputations are built on the same, the corporate world commonly values ownership and secrecy of potentially profitable research discoveries, presenting a dichotomy to the academic researcher (Ambros et al, 2008). Meek and Wood (2016) go further in theorising that the commercialisation of research outputs has the potential to threaten researchers' work, which provokes various forms of cognitive dissonance. Thus, once again the literature can be seen to present tensions emerging from the pursuit of ambidexterity. In this case these tensions are of specific relevance in the context of the commercialisation of university and industry research collaborations.

The duality at the heart of this scientific-economic paradigm infused Feng, Ma, Zhang and Du's (2012) to theorise that this dilemma is best addressed via a collaborative model in which the university exploits their empirical expertise with their industrial partners leading on the commercialisation of research outputs, which can be perceived as a means of adopting structural ambidexterity. Indeed, Ambros et al's (2008) study, which considers Research Council funded Physical and Engineering Science projects in the UK also identifies a predominance of structural ambidexterity at the organisational level, with Technology Transfer Offices acting as brokers between academia and the industrial sector. Here Chang, Yang, Martin, Chi and Tsai-Lin (2016), Chang, Yang and Chen (2009) and Yang, Yang and Chen (2010) lend support to their contention that such dual ambidextrous structures offer a valuable framework to facilitate ambidexterity in research endeavours. Furthermore, structural ambidexterity is identified as playing a vital role in the initial stages of research commercialisation, with organisational flexibility and contextual ambidexterity posited as fundamental to achieving the cultural changes necessary to ensure that such evolutionary transformations endure (Chang et al, 2016). While Yang et al (2010) concur, they suggest that it a combination of structural and contextual ambidexterity that best facilitates research commercialisation. Ambros et al (2008), Chang et al (2016), Chang et al (2009) and Yang et al (2010) focus their attention on contextual ambidexterity,

within university research departments and personnel and identify ambidextrous capacity at the departmental-level with Chang et al (2016) coining the term “Research Ambidexterity”. Interestingly, Ambros et al’s (2008) findings are finally nuanced and suggest that it was possible for individual researchers to exhibit ambidexterity, but that the degree to which the principle investigator is embedded within academia is negatively associated with the commercial success of research projects. Whilst scientific excellence, youth, less seniority, stronger citation records and motivation to engage in commercial endeavours are all positively correlated with the accomplishment of commercial outcomes. This implies a lack of homogeneity across the research community, both in terms of the motivation to develop ambidexterity and the capability to do so. Taken together, the body of work that considers ambidexterity in the context of the research activity of the academy suggests that ambidexterity is of vital importance if academic research departments are to realise their dual scientific-economic aims advanced in the current era of marketisation.

Thus, although limited, the current state of knowledge in this field does lend tentative support to the contention that ambidexterity is in evidence within the sector. It also identifies a clear need for further empirical research to explore the utility of ambidexterity for educational managers tasked with engaging in the transformed educational marketplace.

2.4 Cultivating ambidexterity

Recent years have witnessed considerable advancements in our understanding of the concept of ambidexterity and interest in its cultivation and development has inspired a diverse body of literature in the field of organisational studies (Jansen, George, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2009; Jansen, Simsek & Cao, 2012). Before exploring the current body of evidence further it is worth noting Judge and Blocker's (2008) point that the organisational capacity for change is an essential precursor to ambidexterity and, as such, there is little to be gained from the pursuit of ambidexterity in the absence of an appetite for change. In addition, Chen (2017) is amongst many to recognise that exploration, and thus ambidexterity, requires a tolerance for failure. This suggests that distinguishing between those ventures which may prosper and those which are doomed to fail is a vital capability in explorative endeavours. There is little room to dispute these antecedents, which infer that to embrace an ambidextrous future, organisations must first accept the inevitability of the rapid pace of change and the element of risk, both of which have come to characterise the corporate and quasi-public realm. While this may appear self-explanatory it is important nonetheless, as there is a plethora of evidence which attests to the challenges of implementing organisational change. Moreover, in his investigation into universities' capability of embracing the technological revolution in education, Marshall (2010) mirrors Stoke et al's (2017) findings which infer that a tendency to focus solely on exploitation may be a common barrier to change within universities. Marshall (2010) comments that "disruptive change is problematic for dominant organisations as the natural tendency is to protect existing structures and activities, particularly when those are currently seen as successful" (p. 181).

Many scholars who seek to uncover ambidextrous strategies extol the benefits of structural differentiation based on the premise that explorative and exploitative endeavours require different processes and skill sets and address conflicting demands (Diaz-Fernandez, Pasamar-Reyes & Valle-Cabrera, 2017; Birkinshaw & Gupta, 2013). Indeed, there is clear evidence that this approach acts as a cornerstone within the architecture of many organisations, for example, many distinguish between

the manufacturing and customer service (exploitation) and research and development (exploration) elements of the company. Structural separation is also in evidence in the academy with explorative University Enterprise zones (BIS, 2015: a), university start-up business (Chang, Yang and Chen, 2009) and the dual role of back-office structures and faculties (Tahar et al, 2011). Yet, the work of Heracleous, Papachroni, Andriopoulos and Gotsi, (2017) offers a note of caution to organisations adopting structural approaches as the sole means of pursuing ambidextrous gains. This highly distinctive study examines organisational dysfunction within Xerox PARC and identifies multiple competency traps emanating from their over reliance on structural ambidexterity. Here a high degree of separation between the explorative and exploitative domains coupled with a lack of integration led to significant cognitive and cultural divergence between the two elements. In turn, this compromised the ambidextrous capabilities of the organisation and resulted in missed opportunities to profit from potentially lucrative explorative developments.

Researchers commonly focus their attention on organisations that are evidencing ambidexterity as a means of elucidating those measures which may prove beneficial in its inception. Andriopolous and Lewis's (2009) study is a case in point. Their methodological design drew lessons from an investigation in to ambidextrous product design companies and generated findings which indicate that many firms do not rely on structural means alone but rather utilise a combination of structural ambidexterity at the organisational-level and contextual ambidexterity at the individual-level as a way of integrating and resolving ambidextrous paradoxes at and across multiple levels of organisational management. Chen (2017) and Jansen et al (2009, 2012) concur. Jansen (2012) extends our understanding further by identifying the prevalence of formal boundary-spanning, structural integration mechanisms alongside informal senior team social integration as a method of successfully aligning the two seemingly contradictory forces. The integration of exploration and exploitation is widely portrayed as the remit of those in managerial positions and is considered central for structural ambidexterity to prosper (Mihalache, Jansen, Van den Bosch & Volberda, 2014; Li, 2013; Taylor & Helfat, 2009). Therefore, the specific managerial level at which ambidextrous capability is warranted is dependent

upon the level or levels at which the tensions arise. This goes some way to explaining Zimmermann, Raisch and Cardinal's (2018) findings, which indicate that it is frontline rather than senior managers in whom ambidextrous capability is imperative.

It is little surprise then, that the function of business managers in facilitating and/or adopting contextual ambidexterity in their practice is a growing area of empirical attention in this field. Here, it is the work of Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) which attracts the most attention. Their robust multi-method study investigated contextual ambidexterity and identified a combination of stretch, discipline, support and trust as facilitative factors by which managers can enable organisational ambidexterity. More recently, Hill and Birkinshaw (2014), Malik, Boyle and Mitchell (2017) and Chen and Zhong-Hua (2014) verified the value of a supportive relational context, while Purvee and Enkhtuvshin (2015) confirmed the importance of trustworthiness. However, Jansen et al (2009) highlight the importance of striking a balance between the various factors based on their findings that supportive leadership can prove ineffective in the case of teams with high levels of efficacy. Their study indicated that a strong sense of self belief may be interpreted as indicative of mistrust and/or an erosion of individual autonomy, which strikes a warning bell for those wishing to engender ambidextrous practice in organisational contexts where autonomy and self-direction are the cultural norm.

Psycho-social factors, such as team cohesion and efficacy represent an important evidential stream in this area of the literature, indicating that relationships between team members both at the senior management team-level (Li, 2013) and at lower hierarchical levels (Jansen, Kostopoluos, Milhalache, & Papalexandris, 2016) are vitally important in the advancement of organisational ambidexterity. Thus, this area of research attests to the potential utility of strategies aimed at advancing team cohesion.

The specific managerial behaviours by which contextual ambidexterity is enacted at the individual level has also attracted empirical attention. Turner, Swart, Maylor and Antonacopoulou (2016) make

a valuable contribution to the existing knowledge in this field with their findings derived from eight case studies of projects in the information technology sector. Here, intellectual capital was identified as a vital resource for contextual ambidexterity, which was enacted by managers through the following five actions; buffering; gap-filling; role-expansion; integration; and tone setting. While the majority of these actions can be seen to represent well-articulated aspects of project management it would appear to be those classified as integration in which the "manager actively brings together disparate knowledge within the project" (p. 217), which interrelated with the other four categories to have the greatest impact on the generation of project-based ambidexterity.

The importance of those internal management resources which confer intellectual capital is also implicated as an important aspect of contextual ambidexterity, (Fu, Ma, Bosak & Flood, 2016; Tuner & Lee-Kelly, 2012). Turner and Lee-Kelly (2012) and Fu et al (2015) both identify the sub-components of human, social and organisational capital as important resources in the cultivation of individual ambidexterity. Social capital is fundamentally about the value of social relationships and Lazzarotti, Manzini, Nosella and Pellegrini's (2017) findings identify that internal social capital (within the organisation) facilitate organisational innovation and thus has a positive effect on organisational ambidexterity. In turn Schmitt and Josserand (2014) identify a relationship between external social capital, depicted as individuals' strong and weak network ties, supports business unit ambidexterity.

Cognitive ambidextrous processes are also emphasised in the wider literature with Lin and McDonough (2014) indicating that contextual, individual ambidexterity is dependent upon dual cognitive frames. Smith and Tushman (2005) define this as "cognitive frames and processes that allow teams to effectively embrace, rather than avoid, contradictions" (p. 533) and call for the cognitive decision-making processes of managerial teams to be at the centre of future research interests. Indeed, Zimmerann et al (2018) identify a process of constant cognitive adaption between the two domains as central to ambidextrous performance. The cognitive perspective also forms the focus of Good and Michel's (2013) unique laboratory study which used computer-simulation to investigate 181

undergraduate business students. This study proposed that intelligence, divergent-thinking, focused attention and cognitive flexibility are the variables which interact to determine an individual's task adaptive performance and thus their capacity for ambidexterity. Chen and Zhong-hua (2014) draw findings from a survey of 400 Chinese executives to infer a relationship between personality characteristics, specifically proactive personality, and ambidextrous creativity. While, Tempelaar and Rosenkranz (2017) attend to a single aspect of cognition, role transition, to identify the negative influence of role segmentation and the positive influence of role integration on ambidexterity. Bonesso, Gerli and Scapolan (2014) advance the research corpus further by suggesting that prior work experience and competency profiles may be important antecedents in the development of ambidextrous cognitive frames.

Rosing and Zacher's (2017) takes a different approach to focus on managerial behaviour and extend our understanding by identifying a correlation between the managers ability to effectively balance their time between exploration and exploitation and their ambidextrous performance. Thus, this diverse body of work supports Lee and Lee's (2016) survey data which identified that multiple factors interact to drive ambidexterity. They coin the term "behavioural ambidexterity" to denote the integration of cognition, knowledge and social skills.

The work of Mom, Fourné and Jansen (2015) also indicates that contextual issues, such as the tenure status of the individual and thus job security, impacts on the ambidextrous behaviour of managers, which emphasises the importance of studying contextual ambidexterity in context.

Organisational culture is also widely considered to have an impact on managerial ambidexterity. Wang, Gibbons and Heavey (2014), who explored middle managers ambidextrous capacity contend that discretionary slack, portrayed as the freedom to make autonomous decisions, was positively correlated with ambidexterity. This suggests that those with a desire to engender ambidexterity in others should consider the level of autonomy the organisational culture affords. This is lent support by the findings of Caniëls, Neghina and Schaetsaert (2017) who identified that a perceived culture of

empowerment, rather than a knowledge sharing culture, facilitated ambidexterity. Alongside this Palm and Lilja (2017) suggest public sector organisations need to create leeway for exploration. Yet, Heavey and Simsek's (2014) findings champion the use of well-developed transactive memory systems as a means of assimilating and sharing the knowledge and expertise of top management teams to ambidextrous ends. Support for this assertion is provided by Bocquet and Mothe (2015) who also identified knowledge management systems as an important antecedent to ambidexterity. Therefore, this body of evidence infers that organisations may have much to gain by facilitating an empowering culture whilst also ensuring that knowledge is captured and disseminated for the greater good rather than relying on experienced individuals each of whom may have expertise in some but not all areas of engagement.

Other areas of consideration include the composition of senior management teams. The relative merits of heterogeneity and homogeneity across the team is a central point of controversy (Buyl, Boone & Matthyssens, 2012; García-Granero, Fernández-Mesa, Jansen, & Vega-Jurado, 2018; Li, 2014, 2016). Li (2014) contends that senior team heterogeneity has a dual effect on organizational ambidexterity facilitating strategic planning whilst an increase in the level of conflict also impedes ambidexterity. The results also indicate that integration mechanisms increase the ability of top executives to manage the ambiguous effect of diversity to facilitate organizational ambidexterity. Recent research also indicate that trust and shared responsibilities across the managerial team may moderate the impact of team diversity (García-Granero et al, 2018).

Papachroni, Heracleous and Paroutis (2016) also advance our understanding of the way in which individual managers interpret and resolve the tensions that arise from the quest for ambidexterity. They suggest that such tensions are interpreted differently dependent upon the actor's strategic orientation (exploitative or exploratory) as well as their hierarchical level within the organisation. Ambidextrous tensions are portrayed in multiple ways, firstly at the operational and middle management level the predominant strategic orientation was exploitative, and any tensions

interpreted as complementary, with innovation seen as a process of continuous improvement. At the level of senior management, the strategic orientation was identified as explorative and tensions where interpreted as either interrelated (resolved through structural separation) or conflicting (resolved through temporal separation). Buyl et al (2012) add to this by indicating that behavioural integration acts as a possible moderating factor in terms of the impact of team diversity. While no definitive conclusion can be drawn from this body of literature Li's (2013) findings extend the discussion by indicating that the potential for team diversity to increase conflict can also be moderated by the social capital of top executives. This is supported by the work of Cao et al (2010) who draw correlations between CEO's network extensiveness and organisational ambidexterity.

Another area of investigation is concerned with managerial philosophy and leadership style. Purvee and Enthuvshin (2015) draw from a longitudinal study to support their hypothesis that the effect of transformational leadership on a manager's ambidexterity is greater than that of transactional leadership. This is lent substance by the work of Jansen et al (2008), Yu, Patterson and de Ruyter (2013) and Chang and Hughes (2012). Baškarada, Watson and Cromarty (2016) also suggest that leaders wishing to enact and facilitate ambidexterity require multidimensional approaches, specifically transformational leadership in the context of exploratory innovation and transactional leadership in the context of exploitative innovation. Whilst Mihalache et al, Jansen, Van den Bosch and Volberda (2014) contend that, at the senior management team level, shared leadership proves efficacious given that it promotes a collaborative managerial style in which the tensions arising from the ambidextrous paradox can be reconciled. According to Lin and McDonough (2011) strategic leadership is the vehicle via which a collaborative culture can be developed. They go on to reflect the lack of accord in this area of endeavour by depicting the relationship between ambidexterity and organisational leadership as multidimensional. Rosing, Frese, and Bausch (2011) also point to the lack of concordance regarding the optimal leadership style for ambidexterity and propose a theoretical model of "ambidexterity leadership". This incorporates open leadership behaviours to foster exploration, closed leadership

behaviours to promote exploitation and the flexibility to switch between the two as the situation dictates.

A discrete body of literature, which explores specific managerial tools for fostering ambidexterity, offers potentially valuable information regarding the means by which to develop this organisational skill. Bodwell and Chermack's (2010) theoretical paper presents the case for scenario planning as a method of balancing exploitative and explorative goals, reflecting the tripartite taxonomy of sensing, seizing and reconfiguring offered by Teece (2006).

At present, this area of study remains underdeveloped but does effectively uncover the evolutionary development of ambidexterity as it advanced from the realm of metaphor towards a more tangible concept of efficacy in today's highly dynamic business environment. Taken as a whole, the weight of empirical evidence indicates that organisations wishing to realise ambidextrous ambitions should afford attention to the structure of the organisation incorporating mechanisms for exploitation and exploration and also ensuring its strategic alignment. Consideration to the implementation of knowledge management systems and scenario-planning might also prove beneficial. A combination of the various forms of ambidexterity are portrayed as a viable means of addressing dual organisational aims and contextual ambidexterity is widely considered to be within the gift of those in managerial positions. However, realising its reward may be dependent upon organisational and individual factors such as behavioural, cognitive approaches, leadership style, social capital, organisational culture and team cohesion. What is clear is that there is no blueprint for the development of ambidexterity either at the organisational or individual level. Rather, the literature to date lays bare the multifaceted nature of this concept and necessitates further exploration of its utility within the specific arena of Higher Education.

2.5 Ambidexterity in the context of Higher Education management

If there is one point about which the academic community is in little doubt it is that the Higher Educational landscape is experiencing a period of flux in which is it adapting in response to the changing political, societal and economic conditions of which globalisation and marketisation are chief (Carter, 2013; Cranfield & Taylor, 2008; Giroux, 2009). Barnett (2012) characterises this situation as the "hyper-modernisation" of the university. A survey of UK university vice-chancellors, by the PA Consulting Group [PACG] (2009), reported their perceptions that these transformations culminated in long-term and irreversible cultural climate change of global proportions from "an 'old world' of public funding entitlements to a still-forming 'new world' of income earned through value delivered" (p. 2). Bento (2011: a) is amongst many to point out that this change is emergent in nature rather than programmed and, as such, it is unclear whether these changes represent an evolution towards the development of organisational structures and cultures in which ambidexterity will thrive.

At present, the available evidence regarding the efficacy of ambidexterity in the Higher Education arena is limited in terms of its scope, transferability and breadth. Yet much can be derived from broadening our critical gaze to consider the wealth of literature which explores leadership and management within contemporary Higher Education to consider our preparedness for an ambidextrous future. The PACG report of 2009 advised universities to respond to the changing economic and political climate with "strong leadership, agility and innovation, altering business models to diversify funding streams … concentrating on improving focus, excellence, agility, impacts and viability" (p. 1). Alarmingly in a subsequent report PACG (2010) indicated that only 28 per cent of vice-chancellors were confident of their ability to affect the changes needed, while just 55 per cent perceived their organisations to have fully-effective leadership capabilities. Furthermore, Jamieson (2012) postulates that the current era of austerity in the UK Higher Education system poses the greatest leadership challenge to the sector.

The global nature of the transformational changes impacting upon the sector infer the transferability of Drew, Ehrich and Hansford's (2008) findings drawn from a qualitative investigation into the issues and challenges facing those in leadership positions in Australia. Here, strategic leadership and change capability were identified as critical in managing the emerging challenges identified as a need for flexibility and creativity, coupled with an ability to respond to the competing pressures to maintain and enhance academic quality and remain relevant. A central theme in this area of the literature is the importance of the human factors of collegiality and social capital (Drew, Enhrich & Hansford, 2008; Jamieson, 2012; Bento, 2011: a & b). However, Jamieson's (2012) action research study indicates that recent changes to the educational system including performativity and the introduction of managerialism, have eroded the trust placed in leaders, which was further accentuated by a sense of distance between senior leaders and the academic community. The work of Hancock and Hellawell (2016) lends support to this assertion, with middle managers expressing the view that their seniors' 'real' agendas hide behind the rhetoric and are not explained much less discussed with them to the detriment of their performance. This implies the importance of strategies such as transparency and openness to build trust as a critical antecedent to the development of a culture in which contextual ambidexterity can thrive. Yet the distrust in the corporatisation of the academy shown by the academic heartland is also depicted as causing further tensions in the role of the academic manager (Winter, 2009). Whitchurch (2010) suggests that those occupying middle management positions are facing a unique challenge emanating from the evolution process. Middle managers are portrayed as balancing the dichotomous agendas of their superiors and those they manage. This creates the potential to be perceived by the senior management team as 'going native' should they support the agenda of their academic colleagues and/ or 'following the corporate line' should they prioritise the strategic agenda.

Hancock and Hellawell's (2016) study indicate that some managers employ strategies that enable them to hide from these tensions by presenting opposing views and values in different contexts rather than adopting the integrative approaches indicative of ambidexterity. The role of middle managers

such as Deans of Faculty and Heads of Department is further problematised within the literature. Whitchurch (2010) and Rudhumbu (2015) point to a high degree of contestation regarding the nature of this role and its diversity both across and within Higher Educational establishments. Indeed, career trajectories into managerial and leadership positions vary considerably and often draw on evidence of effective performance within an academic role as an indication of suitability. Dopson et al (2016) highlight a deficit of rigorous evidence to support the development of leadership capability in the UK Higher Educational arena. Yet this is the level at which the strategic and operational functions of the university are integrated and thus ambidextrous capability is of optimal importance. There is also evidence that the hierarchical structure of some organisations may impact on the ability of academic managers to enact ambidexterity in their working lives which Middlehurst (2007) articulated as a distinctive feature of university departments that are portrayed as having "insufficient autonomy to carry management through" (p. 50). More promisingly, Cranfield and Taylor's (2008) investigation, which explored seven UK universities use of knowledge management systems, did uncover a tendency towards the devolution of power and budgetary control away from the centre, which may facilitate the autonomy and discretionary slack required to enact contextual ambidexterity. However, they also identified significant variation in the stage of evolution of each organisation mirroring the findings of West (2008, a) who identified considerable differentiation in the extent to which managerial staff in Higher Education are given, or allow themselves, the time and space to apply principles of strategic management.

Encouragingly, the managerial literature does include some evidence of the emergence of contextual ambidexterity. An example of this can be found in the work of Birds (2014) who conducted a qualitative study with the aim of examining the notion of entrepreneurialism in UK universities, specifically the role of "entrepreneurial managers". Her interviews focused on the experiences of university managerial personnel with predominantly explorative remits, incorporating activities such as the management of profit-making projects or spin off companies and conclude that the entrepreneurial manager is an emerging role in today's educational arena. However, the experience

of this role is problematised with evidence of multiple barriers emerging. Participants recounted challenges in navigating the overly bureaucratic university structure, felt mired in organisational politics and decried their lack of autonomy and power, leading to the conclusion that "the entrepreneur-manager's contribution was curtailed, and the university failed to capitalise on the potential offered" (p. 71).

In summary, there is a wealth of literature which attests to the dynamic and changing nature of today's Higher Educational arena and much to suggest that the evolutionary pressure of the marketisation agenda is transforming universities internal structures to align with their ambidextrous counterparts in the corporate arena. Moreover, many of the tensions which commonly arise from the exploratory/ exploitative paradox, such as the need to balance resources, integrate knowledge and facilitative a collaborative and supportive organisational structure are in evidence in the academy. However, it is also clear that there is significant variation in the extent to which organisations, faculty and individuals have adapted to develop those capabilities that might best facilitate an ambidextrous future and accordingly educational managers face several more nuanced and context-specific challenges. These include the proliferation of overly bureaucratic mechanisms, tensions inherent in the scientific-economic paradigm of research commercialisation and a clear need to bridge the schism between the strategic direction of the academy and the normative values of the academic heartland. This raises serious questions regarding the capacity of the sector to develop cultures which facilitate contextual ambidexterity. Given Stokes et al (2015) and Ambros et al's (2008) contention that the tensions between exploitation and exploration are more salient at the individual-level there is a clear need for further study in this field. Whilst it may be beyond the remit of a single study to address all the requirements outlined above, the collective weight of this evidence highlights the fundamental necessity of turning our empirical gaze to explore the lived experiences of academics and educational managers who are tasked with the considerable challenge of conducting their craft in this increasingly dynamic and pressurised educational arena.

2.6 Chapter summary

The extant literature challenges early assumptions that exploitation and exploration are orthogonal and provides compelling evidence that ambidexterity is both possible and highly desirable in today's rapidly evolving world. At present, our knowledge of this field can best be described as patch-work with significant gaps and areas of dispute. However, there is an emerging evidence base elucidating some of the strategies that might facilitate the development of structural, contextual and temporal ambidexterity and thus hold dynamic ambidexterity in their gift. Together with tentative support for the contention that universities internal structures and cultures are evolving to meet the contemporary challenges of marketisation. Yet there is significant variation in the changes taking place across the sector and the simultaneous pursuit of exploitative and explorative advances is inspiring tensions at the very heart of the academy. Furthermore, it is those employed in managerial positions who have the unenviable job of synchronising the disparate values and strategic priorities of the organisation and the academic community against whose performance it will be measured. The literature makes a compelling case for the application of an ambidextrous model as a lens through which to uncover the realities of the academic manager's role during these uniquely challenging times. To date, scant attention has been afforded to the ambidextrous capacity of Higher Education organisations and less still the role and experience of managerial personnel challenged with realising its potential, rendering this a fruitful area of future empirical endeavour.

3 Chapter 3 – Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the philosophical, ontological and epistemological stance taken by the researcher before outlining the research design. Consideration is also afforded to the ethicality of the study as well as the methods used to ensure its rigour.

3.2 Theoretical framework, Ontological and epistemological perspective

It is of fundamental importance that researchers clearly articulate their ontological and epistemological beliefs if they are to draw credible theoretical conclusions from their empirical work (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Lowe, 2008; Dillon & Wals, 2006). Ontology is concerned with the philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (Blaikie, 2007; Esterby-Smith, Thorpe, Jackson & Lowe, 2008) otherwise expressed as the nature of being (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). At one end of the ontological continuum lie those who ascribe to the belief that there is an objective and measurable truth. Here the terms objectivism, positivism and relativism denote the belief that "social entities exist in reality external to social actors concerned with their existence" (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2012: p. 110). The dominance of this ontological position has been challenged by a school of scholars who reject the central tenet of an observable and measurable single reality, in favour of the ontological philosophies of idealism or interpretivism. The central contention of this ontology is that social phenomena are created from the perceptions, representations and consequent actions of the social actors concerned and, as such, multiple truths exist (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Whilst there is an abundance of finely nuanced positions along the continuum, this study gives primacy to the perceptions and interpretations of the human actors, i.e. managers of health professional education, and adopts an interpretivist ontological perspective. Interpretivists aim to provide a deep insight into

"the complex world of lived experience from the view point of those who live it" (Schwandt, 1994: p. 118) and the researcher's interpretations are acknowledged as central part of this process (Andrade, 2009).

Closely coupled with ontology, epistemology focuses not on *what is* but rather *how* and *what it is possible to know* (Chia, 2002). Easterby-Smith et al (2008) offer the definition of epistemology as "a general set of assumptions about the ways of inquiring into the nature of the world" (p. 60). Given the ontological position of this study, and the researcher's intention to explore the lived experience of participants engaged in a socially defined activity, attention was afforded to the epistemological theory of social constructionism. Social constructionists draw on sociological and psychological theories to present the notion of multiple perceptual realities in which knowledge is constructed, as opposed to created, and reject the relativist perspective (Andrews, 2012). Thus, Easterby-Smith et al's (2008) definition of social constructionism asserts that "reality is not objective and exterior, but socially constructed and given meaning by people" (p. 58). As such this study presents data which explores the experiences of those managing professional health education as "constructed frameworks rather than direct reflections of the real" (Raskin, 2008; p. 16). Language and 'reality' are taken to be reflexively linked and language is posited as the vehicle by which these actor's interpretations of reality can be known (Gee, 2005). Hence the social constructionist epistemology of this study reflects the focus on interpretations of the participant's reality whilst contextualising these representations within the social organisation, the case, from which they emerge.

The ontological and epistemological philosophical foundations of the study inform the research strategy (Flowers, 2009). Blaikie (2007) draws a distinction between inductive and deductive research. For this study an inductive approach is utilised, where "theories are formulated by drawing general inferences from particulars or cases of empirical data" (McAbee, Landis, & Burke, 2017: p. 278). Thus, this study uses inductive reasoning to build theory, as opposed to deductive theory-testing, which is particularly fitting given the paucity of existing evidence regarding the experiences of ambidexterity

in quasi-public sector organisations in the UK. Furthermore, Woo, O'Boyle and Spector (2017) and Tracy (2012) reflect the widely-held contention that a healthy science necessitates a balance of all four forms of inference and call for an increased emphasis on inductive research in the field of organisational science. As is common in interpretative, inductive studies a qualitative research strategy was employed given its focus on finding answers to questions about social experiences and the meaning individuals attribute to them (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011). Qualitative research is defined as the "studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observations. Historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual's lives" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011: p. 3). Holliday (2002) suggests qualitative endeavours afford a detailed exploration into the experiences of individuals and groups within particular social settings rather than in broad populations, making this a particularly appropriate approach for this case study. Furthermore, a central strength of qualitative research lies in the potential for the discovery of meaningful personal perspectives.

3.3 Research Design

This empirical endeavour utilises a single case study design. Definitions of case study research proliferate with the term used interchangeably in reference to the process, the product or the unit of study (Carolan, Forbat & Smith, 2015). Yin's (2009) definition of case study research as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 18) focuses on the research process and is considered most fitting in this instance. This is based on the premise that context has a significant impact on organisational behaviours (Johns, 2006), as such this study investigates managers lived experience of ambidexterity within the context of the Higher Education sector. The extant literature supports the use of this empirical design given that it clearly

illustrates that the phenomenon of interest, managers' experience of ambidexterity, and the professional and political context in which it is encountered, the marketisation of Higher Education, are interrelated and multifaceted. A case study approach is considered an effective means of answering "how" and "why" research questions, particularly when the research aims to explore the contemporary, contextual conditions considered relevant to the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2014).

Critics of case study methodology commonly draw on positivist criteria such as generalisability, internal validity and reliability to denounce it as unscientific which is rejected here on ontological and epistemological grounds. Indeed, despite the methodological criticisms outlined above our current understanding of ambidexterity, and indeed organisational and managerial theory more broadly, owe much to case study researchers (Carter, 2013; Cranfield & Taylor, 2008; Danson & Kierulf, 2016; Fatemeh et al, 2014).

The aim of this study is to engage in a detailed exploration of healthcare managers' experiences of ambidexterity in such a way as to capture the complexity of their work in context. Gaya and Smith (2016) vigorously advocate for the use of single case study design as a valuable means by which to achieve such ambitions and generate new theory in the realm of managerial research. Moreover, a central strength of the case study design is found in the diverse ways in which it can be utilised (Vissak, 2010). However, Thomas (2011) is amongst many to suggest that a product of this heterogeneity is a lack of organisational structure, which leads to widespread calls for case study researchers to clearly articulate their particular methodological processes (Andrade, 2009; Baxter & Jack, 2008; Vissak, 2010). As such typological classifications, which demarcate by sample characteristics and intended purpose, were afforded consideration. Yin (2003) suggests that descriptive, exploratory or explanatory designs typify case study research. The deductive inference in these typologies is evident in Yin's (2014) depiction of multiple case studies as a means of exploring, explaining or describing the differences within and between cases, based on a theory. Stake (2006) offers an alternative functional

classification drawing a distinction between instrumental, intrinsic and collective case studies. The study presented here draws influence from both prominent theorists in that it has exploratory intent, insofar as the aim is to explore the phenomenon of interest, which Stake (2006) refers to as the "quintain". However, the extent to which the motivation for this study is intrinsic or instrumental in nature presents more of a challenge. Carolan, Forbat and Smith (2015) clearly articulate the difference thus: "an intrinsic case study seeks to develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular case for its own value whereas an instrumental case study seeks to provide insight into a wider issue or to theoretically refine a theoretical explanation." (p. 2). The researcher, in this study, is employed in a managerial capacity in the organisation under investigation and as such it would disingenuous not to acknowledge an interest in the case itself (intrinsic). At the same time the researcher has a wider empirical interest regarding the impact of the marketisation of healthcare education on ambidextrous managerial practice (instrumental). As such, the instrumental function of providing insight into this national, and to a lesser extent global, issue combines with the intrinsic motivation as an employee within this exploratory case.

To explore how ambidexterity is experienced by managers of health professional education

'How is ambidexterity experienced by managers of health professional education?'

Sub-Research Question 1: 'How do exploitation and exploration occur at the level of managers of health professional education?'

Sub-Research Question 2: 'What tensions arise in the pursuit of ambidexterity by managers of health professional education?'

Sub– Research Question 3: 'What are the enablers and barriers to ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?'

Balancing exploitative and explorative pursuits (ambidexterity) is identified as a key facet of organisational success and the ability to reconcile any tensions which arise is a central challenge of contemporary managerial practice

Inductive case study, combining documentary archive data and qualitative interviews with managers of professional healthcare education to understand their experience of ambidexterity

Figure 2: Research design. Adapted from Partington 2008, cited in Flowers (2009)

3.4 Data collection

A hallmark of case study research is its holistic approach in which multiple sources of data are collected and analysed to enhance the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2014; Carolan et al, 2015). In this study the data is predominantly narrative in form, primarily derived from a series of interviews with managers of health professional education within the case. This is complemented by publicly available documentary evidence of relevance to the case. Additional data alluded to within the interviews, e.g. minutes of meetings (between 2014 and 2018) identified by the participants as relevant to their experience of ambidexterity, are included as archive documentary data. Thus, the documentary evidence is used to inform the iterative process of interpreting the interview data, reflecting Andrade's (2009) term "corroboration" via which a combination of evidence is used to strengthen the arguments made.

3.4.1 Key informant interviews

Interviews are widely recognised as a powerful and highly flexible means by which to gain insights into participants' lived experiences and the meanings they attribute to them (Turner, 2010; Jacob & Furgerson, 2012; Rabionet, 2011; Bryman, 2012; Holloway & Wheeler, 2002). Yin (2014) indicates that interviews are amongst the most important sources of evidence in case study research and points to widespread variation in the way they are utilised to collect data.

Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) suggest that a central decision when gathering data via interviews lies in the degree of structure imposed on the process. The term "semi-structured interviews" is commonly used to describe the data collection process in qualitative research (Creswell, 2013). Yet this term lacks specificity as it is applied to interviews with highly variable degrees of structure along a continuum. This spans those which adopt a conversational approach to consider the research question in its broadest sense, those which utilise a general topic guide to identify key areas to be discussed and those with a greater degree of structure with specific questions to be asked in a pre-ordained fashion

(Gall et al, 2003). The efficacy of the various options is highly contested (Patton, 2002; Polit & Beck, 2009) and, having afforded due consideration to this issue, this study utilised an interview guide together with suggested questions (see Appendix C) which were designed not to impose structure on the interview, but to stimulate and encourage the narrative. A small pilot study was conducted, with participants from another faculty within the organisation, to test and refine the interview questions and facilitate the identification of potential prompts. The questions were not posed in a routine way or following a predetermined pattern, rather the format in which they were asked was dictated by the direction of the dialogue with the aim of retaining a conversational tone. This enabled the stream of questions to be fluid rather than rigid (Rubin & Rubin, 2011) whilst ensuring that discussions explored the topics of interest, reflecting Creswell, Hanson, Plano, & Morales's (2007) emergent design.

The primary goal of interpretative interviews is to collect data from a sample of individuals that have experience of the phenomenon of interest, an approach which is widely defined as purposive sampling (Palys, 2008). In this case the phenomenon of interest is managers experience of ambidexterity and as such participation was sought from the faculty management group (11 individuals in total). Initial contact was made via email asking for volunteers to take part in the study and further information was provided in a participant information sheet (see appendix 8). The participants were offered the choice of location to maximise comfort, alleviate any anxiety and respect issues such as accessibility and travel arrangements, as suggested by Kvale (2007). Throughout the interviews, the investigator sought to develop a rapport with the participant and promote candour as described by Polit and Beck (2009), as this encourages a sense of trust, which is key to the collection of qualitative data (Parahoo, 2006). With the consent of the interviewees the interviews were recorded onto a digital recording device, which was placed out of sight of the participant so as not to distract or intrude. To facilitate data analysis the recorded data was transcribed verbatim. Although this is a time-consuming process the researcher shares Lapadat's (2000) perception that the audio recordings and not the transcripts are the real data and as such the transcription process offers the investigator a valuable opportunity to gain familiarity with the data. All 11 members of the faculty management group were interviewed

plus an additional member who was temporarily appointed as a Head of Department to cover a period of sickness. Thus, a total of twelve interviews were conducted, the length of the interviews varied between 32 and 58 minutes.

3.4.2 Documentary data

The use of multiple data sources is a defining feature of case study research based on the premise that findings are more dependable when they can be buttressed by several independent sources (Miles & Huberman, 1984). This form of data triangulation is widely considered a valuable means of enhancing the credibility of research findings (Yin, 2003; Crowe et al, 2011) and, as such, this case study combines primary interview data with secondary documentary data collection. Prior to the interviews, publicly available documentary data was collected to support the researcher in portraying and enriching the context to contribute to an analysis of issues (Simons, 2009). While the socially constructed nature of this dataset is acknowledged (MacDonald, 2008) documents were selected for their ability to afford an insight into organisational vision, values, culture and performance (see Table 1).

During the key informant interviews, participants made frequent reference to the monthly Faculty Management Group (FMG) meetings and quarterly Business Enterprise and Knowledge Transfer (BEKT) committee. Here, FMG and BEKT were depicted to offer the opportunity for the managerial team to discuss, debate and influence the strategic direction of the business unit and, as such, permission was sought to include the minutes of these meetings. Thus, the final data set included minutes of meetings held between September 2014 and April 2018. This documentary data differs significantly from the organisational level documentation in that its intended audience is the managerial team and, therefore, is socially constructed with the aim of providing a retrospective record of managerial discussions and decision-making in this case.

3.4.3 Summary

Taken together, this dataset combined documentary information, revealing the wider organisational context, with interview data in which managers were able to share their experiences of ambidexterity together with a final set of textual archive data, identified as pertinent to the research topic. This considered the case during a four-year period and the diverse dataset (outlined in Table 1) afforded a rich and detailed exploration of the research questions in this case.

Table 1 - Dataset

Data type	Source	Abbreviation
Documentary data - Organisational level, publicly available	Corporate plan 2015	CP
	Research and Knowledge Transfer Strategy	RKTS
	Marketing Strategy	MS
	Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017-2022	LTS
	People Management and Development Strategy 2010-2015 (most recent version available)	PMDS
	Partnership and International Strategy	PIS
	Widening Participation Strategy	WPS
	Sustainability Strategy	SS
	Careers and Employability Strategy	CES
	Annual Report and Financial Statements (from) 2014-2017	ARFS
	TEF submission 2017	TEF 1
	TEF outcome statement 2017	TEF 2
	Job description - Head of Department	JD1
	Job description - Deputy Head of Department	JD2
Key Informant interviews 12 Interviews with managerial staff	This included the entire faculty management team (see Figure 6 Page 72) Participants included; Senior Leader of Business Unit, Senior Leader – Learning and Teaching, Senior Leader – Business and Enterprise 5 Departmental managers, 1 Acting Departmental manager, 3 Cross Faculty Managers Total time of audio = 8 hrs 35 minutes Word count of transcripts = 83,265 words	Pseudonyms used
Documentary Data – Business unit level minutes of meetings 2014-2018	Business Enterprise Knowledge Transfer Committee minutes 2014 - 2 sets of minutes 2015 – 3 sets of minutes 2016 – 4 sets of minutes 2017 – 4 sets of minutes	BEKT

	2018 – 1 set of minutes Total = 14 sets of minutes	
	Faculty Management Group meeting minutes 2014 - 3 sets of minutes 2015 – 5 sets of minutes 2016 – 10 sets of minutes 2017 – 8 sets of minutes 2018 – 1 set of minutes Total = 27 sets of minutes	FMG

3.5 Data analysis

The diverse and highly complex data that emerges through case study methodologies renders the analytical process uniquely challenging and, as a result few scholars offer methodological guidance (Houghton, Murphy, Shaw, & Casey, 2015). Nonetheless Yin (1998) highlights the importance of utilising a systematic framework to ensure the rigour and logic of the analytical process. While Stake (2006) points out that those analytical strategies that do exist all share common characteristics and stages which enable researchers to rigorously and creatively organise, find patterns in and elicit meaning from the data. In broad terms these processes can be seen to be congruent with the principles of thematic, content analysis which is aimed at identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns or themes within the data (Patton, 2002).

For this study the interview and documentary data were analysed in accordance with Morse's (1994) four stage framework of 'comprehending', 'synthesising', 'theorising' and 'reconceptualising'. The strategies proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) informed the analytical process at each stage (see Table 2). Miles and Huberman (1994) purport to offer a "form of analysis that sharpens, sorts, focuses, discards, and organizes data…that conclusions can be drawn" (p. 10) and their strategy has found widespread acceptance amongst case study researchers (Yin, 2003; Simons, 2009; Houghton et al, 2015).

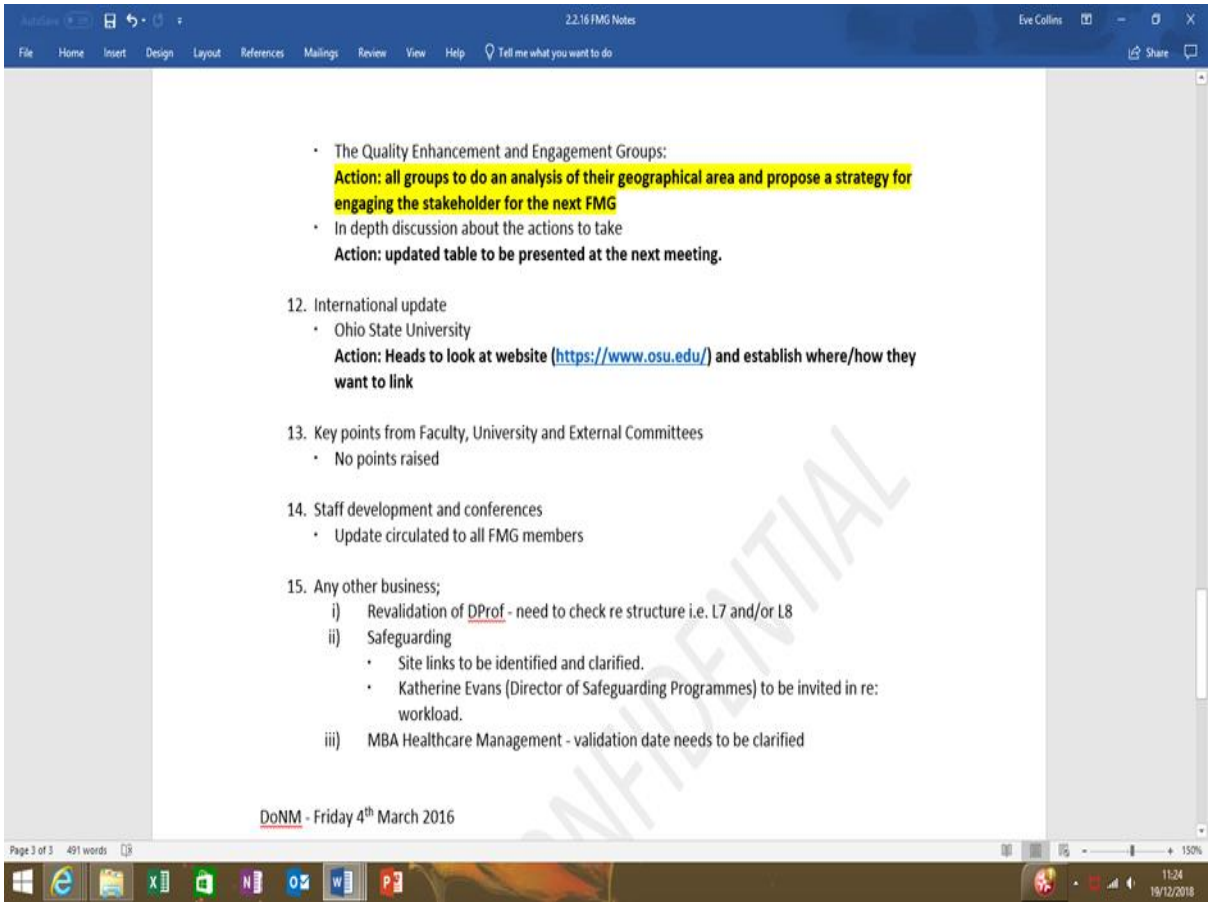
The analytical process was ongoing and iterative and accordingly the comprehending stage of analysis began as soon as the data collection commenced (Silverman, 2014). Morse (1994) denotes this stage

of the process as highly inductive, with the aim of gathering enough data to develop a detailed and rich description of the case study data. This involved the researcher becoming immersed in the data until broad codes emerged. Here, the data is fractured into codes which assign a conceptual label to excerpts of the data interpreted as sharing a common meaning (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid & Redwood, 2013). Whilst this decontextualizes the data (Ayres, Kavanaugh & Knafl, 2003), Miles and Huberman (1994) contend that this process enables the researcher to uncover and develop the central concepts, ideas and meaning therein (see Appendix E: Illustration of data coding). An example of this stage of the process is demonstrated in Figures 3 and 4. Here the highlighted areas of text share a focus on the importance of engaging with external stakeholders and represented one of the initial conceptual labels.

The next stage of the analytical process, described as 'synthesising', sought to reassemble the data to reveal typical and composite patterns (Morse 1994). Miles and Huberman's (1994) pattern-coding strategy was used to deepen the analysis by exploring each code in depth and creating sub-codes, as well as explanatory and inferential codes which reveal the relationships between the broad codes to create more meaningful analysis. In the examples provided above the documentary data (Figure 3) incorporates two distinct rationales for emphasising stakeholder engagement, firstly as a way of developing social capital with employing organisations and secondly as a means of gathering market intelligence to inform strategic decision making. Thus, this documentary excerpt became part of two of the codes which made up categories within the forth theme on the findings which outlined the ambidextrous tactics employed in this case (4.5.5 Charming the pants off them: p. 107 and 4.5.4 Gathering intelligence and crystal ball gazing: p. 105). The interview data (Figure 4) has a narrower focus and formed part of the data corpus for the later of these categories. Thus, the process of synthesising the data involved cycles of expanding, collapsing and merging codes and returning to the raw data to test out how well they represented the meaning within (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The next stage of the analytical process involved building a comprehensive and reasoned account of the data. Morse (1994) describes this stage of theorising as rigorously viewing, reviewing and challenging the data. Thus, pattern codes were distilled and ordered to create themes and sub-themes which best represented interpretations of meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1984) advocate the development of propositions as the final stage of analysis. This approach was not adopted, rather the themes and executive summary statements where tested against the data and the relationships between each theme and sub-theme were explored. This final process of reconceptualisation facilitated a sharpening and shaping of the themes to build a coherent explanation of the findings and support the development of a thematic map, which enhanced the depth of the analysis and afforded an insight into ambidexterity across the entire business unit.

Figure 3 – Sample of documentary data extract (FMG notes 5.2.16)



- The Quality Enhancement and Engagement Groups:
  Action: all groups to do an analysis of their geographical area and propose a strategy for engaging the stakeholder for the next FMG
- In depth discussion about the actions to take
  Action: updated table to be presented at the next meeting.

12. International update
    - Ohio State University
      Action: Heads to look at website (https://www.osu.edu/) and establish where/how they want to link

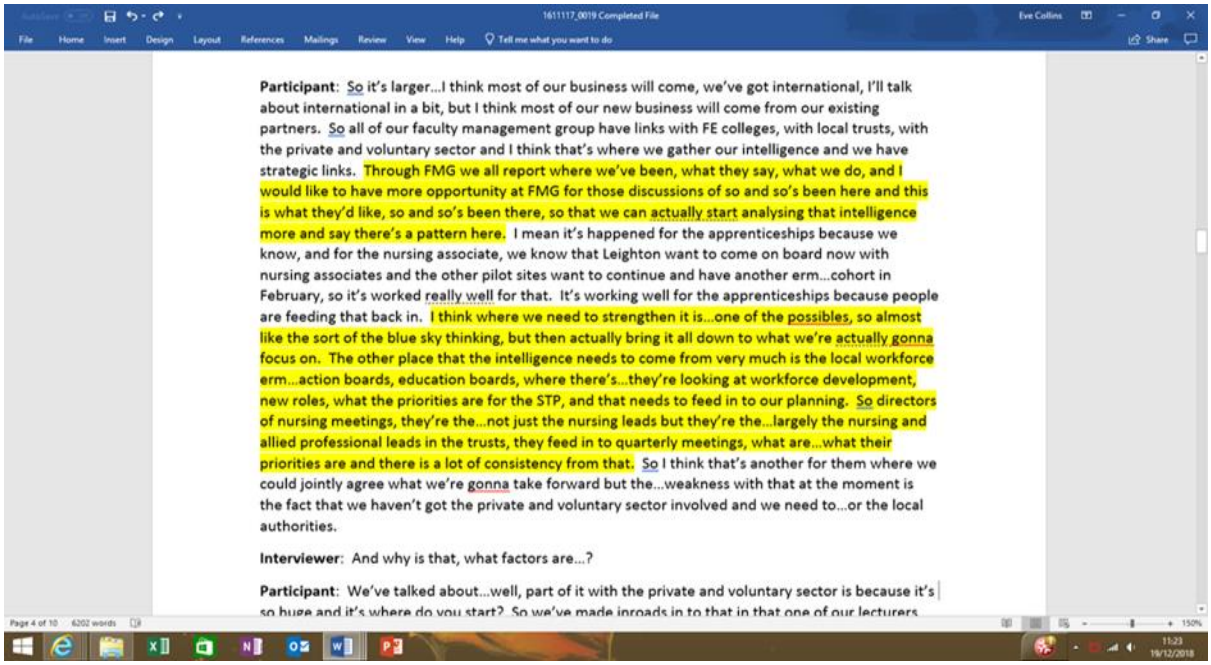
13. Key points from Faculty, University and External Committees
    - No points raised

14. Staff development and conferences
    - Update circulated to all FMG members

15. Any other business;
    i) Revalidation of DProf - need to check re structure i.e. L7 and/or L8
    ii) Safeguarding
        - Site links to be identified and clarified.
        - Katherine Evans (Director of Safeguarding Programmes) to be invited in re: workload.
    iii) MBA Healthcare Management - validation date needs to be clarified

DoNM - Friday 4th March 2016

Figure 4 – Sample of Interview data extract (Jo)



Participant: So it's larger...I think most of our business will come, we've got international, I'll talk about international in a bit, but I think most of our new business will come from our existing partners. So all of our faculty management group have links with FE colleges, with local trusts, with the private and voluntary sector and I think that's where we gather our intelligence and we have strategic links. Through FMG we all report where we've been, what they say, what we do, and I would like to have more opportunity at FMG for those discussions of so and so's been here and this is what they'd like, so and so's been there, so that we can actually start analysing that intelligence more and say there's a pattern here. I mean it's happened for the apprenticeships because we know, and for the nursing associate, we know that Leighton want to come on board now with nursing associates and the other pilot sites want to continue and have another erm...cohort in February, so it's worked really well for that. It's working well for the apprenticeships because people are feeding that back in. I think where we need to strengthen it is...one of the possibles, so almost like the sort of the blue sky thinking, but then actually bring it all down to what we're actually gonna focus on. The other place that the intelligence needs to come from very much is the local workforce erm...action boards, education boards, where there's...they're looking at workforce development, new roles, what the priorities are for the STP, and that needs to feed in to our planning. So directors of nursing meetings, they're the...not just the nursing leads but they're the...largely the nursing and allied professional leads in the trusts, they feed in to quarterly meetings, what are...what their priorities are and there is a lot of consistency from that. So I think that's another for them where we could jointly agree what we're gonna take forward but the...weakness with that at the moment is the fact that we haven't got the private and voluntary sector involved and we need to...or the local authorities.

Interviewer: And why is that, what factors are...?

Participant: We've talked about...well, part of it with the private and voluntary sector is because it's so huge and it's where do you start? So we've made inroads in to that in that one of our lecturers

Table 2: Analytical process

Table of analytical process			
Step	Stages of analysis Morse (1994)	Analysis strategies Miles and Huberman (1994)	Explanation of process
1.	Comprehending	Broad Coding	Immersion in the data. This facilitated the identification of initial board codes relating to repeated points or perceptions emphasised within the transcripts and/or documents. Repeated systematic analysis of the entire data set to test and refine broad codes and collate data of relevance to each code.
2.	Synthesising	Pattern coding. Memoing and drafting executive summary statements	Collating codes into categories and then repeatedly returning to the data to refine categories, exploring the relationships between them and identifying themes.
3.	Theorising	Distilling and ordering. Testing executive summaries	Testing, retesting and refining themes and categories against the entire dataset. Exploring the relationships between themes.

4.	Reconceptualising	Developing propositions – not adopted	Development of a conceptual model to depict healthcare managers experience of ambidexterity in the context of this case.

This study is not explicitly ethnographical however the emic positionality of the researcher played an influential role in the analytical process. Whilst the steps outlined here articulate the specific analytical processes undertaken, this highly interpretive process was experienced as a continuous facet of the life of the researcher during the period of the study. Sense making moments sometimes occurred outside of the time specifically dedicated to the analysis and on reflection the researchers work offered unsolicited and sometimes unconscious opportunities to test, retest and refine the findings (see Appendix F: Excerpts from reflective journal). This supports Maydell's (2010) contention that "the researcher who comes from an insider perspective has an autoethnographic position by default" (p. 1).

3.6 Strategies to enhance the rigour of the study

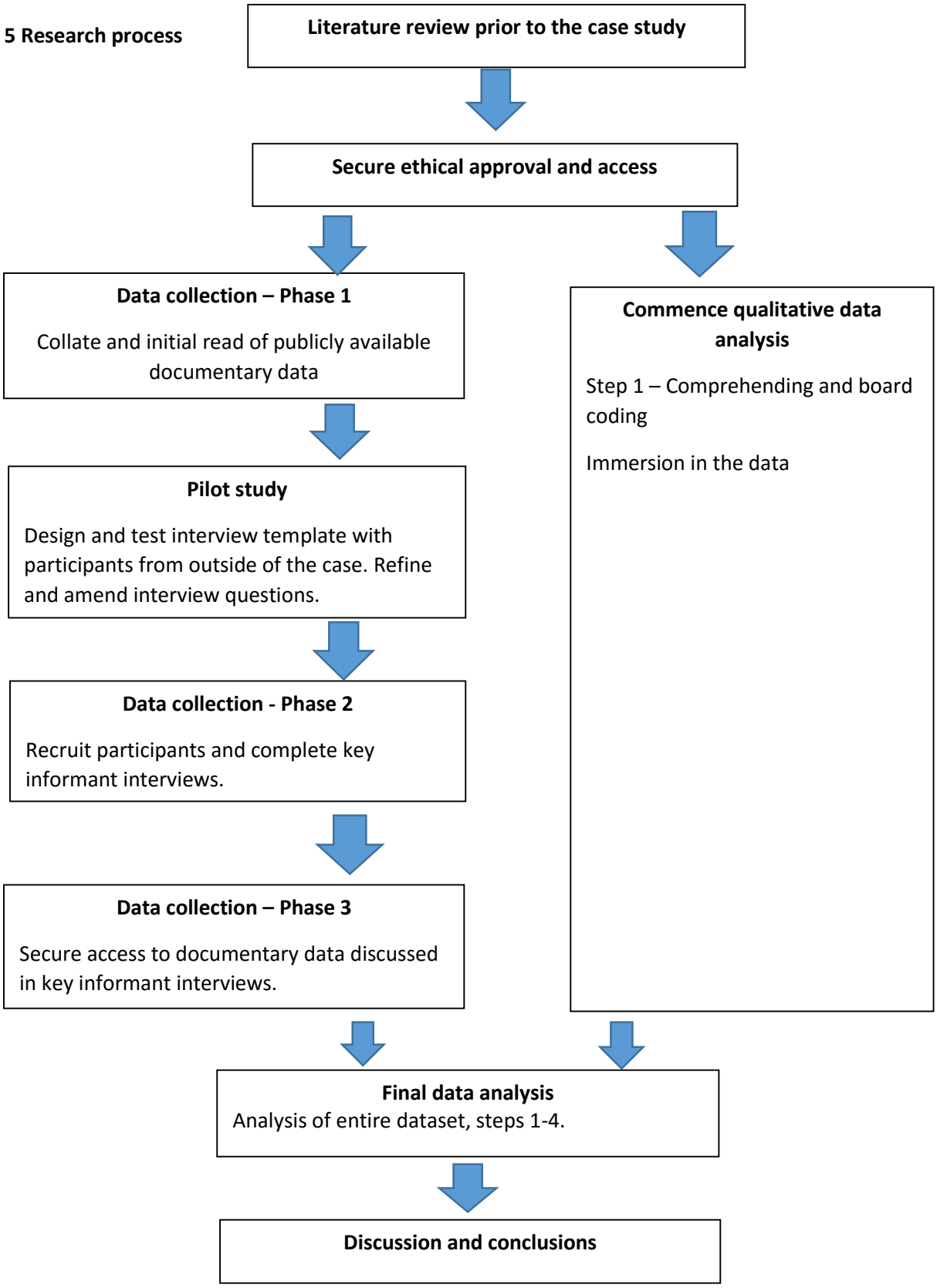
To promote credibility within the study, the investigator considered the audibility, applicability and truth-value, which Ryan-Nicholls and Will (2009), argue are strategies for achieving rigour in qualitative research. Audibility refers to the researchers making clear their intentions and interest in the research topic; explaining the reasons for sample selection and making all memos and coding data available for external scrutiny (Koch, 2004). Applicability and truth-value require the researcher to ensure that data analysis incorporates both the typical and atypical aspects of the data into the final report. In keeping with social constructionism, the investigator maintained a reflexive approach (see Appendix F), which Carolan (2003), describes as the researcher being self-aware about how their own values, behaviours and presence can affect data gathering. Lastly, the interview participants were given the opportunity to comment on the credibility of the findings before the final report was written

(Creswell & Miller, 2010). The findings were then compared with the previous research into ambidexterity, (see discussion chapter), which Eisenhardt (2007) suggests enhances both the rigour and transferability of a study.

3.7 Outline of research process

The research design consisted of the following:

Figure 5 Research process



3.8 Boundary conditions

Without a doubt it is essential that single case study research attends to a case that meets all of the conditions necessary to afford a detailed insight into the phenomenon of interest and address the research questions. Therefore, the value of qualitative research is dependent upon the engagement of participants that have both the necessary expertise to address the research question and a willingness to share their experiences (Creswell, 2013). This study needed to focus on a University Faculty of healthcare education during the current period of marketisation in the UK. The researcher's own faculty of employment met these conditions and offered several additional benefits beyond simple practicality. Gaining meaningful access is a central challenge for case study researchers (Thomas, 2015). While it may be possible to attain approval to conduct a study of this kind, as an outside researcher, gaining the trust needed to gather rich insightful information would be far more difficult. As such, it was determined that the objectivity offered as an outside researcher would be at the potential detriment to the central aim of the study, which is to develop a detailed understanding of the complex organisational culture and the experiences of the actors within. Thus, this study is unapologetically emic in nature, which McNess, Arthur and Crossley (2015) denote as "seeking to understand a culture from the inside" (p. 298).

Consideration was also afforded to the time boundaries of this study as a central means of tightening the connections between the case and the research questions (Yin, 2014). The senior manager of the faculty at the focus of this case identified 2014 as the point at which the wider organisation called upon the business unit to adopt dual strategic priorities and as such data collection focused on the period between 2014 and 2018.

Both Yin (2003) and Stake (1995) advocate the use of clearly articulated case boundaries to ensure the empirical scrutiny remains focused and the following boundaries were observed:

- A focus on staff in managerial positions within the case.

- Secondary data e.g. archival records including publicly available documentation and minutes of meetings related to the last four years (2014-2018).
- A focus on managers experiences of ambidexterity.

Access to archive or documentary data not in the public domain was dependent upon the permission of a gatekeeper for this case study. While this is acknowledged as a limitation, access was only denied for a single data-source, which was considered commercially sensitive. The content of potential relevance to this study was in evidence in the wider data corpus and thus its omission had minimal impact on the findings.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The ethicality of a research study is universally acknowledged as a primary area of concern for all researchers (Sikes, 2006; Silverman, 2010). This study was granted ethical approval from the Faculty of Business and Management ethics committee at the University of Chester. This assures that it meets the prominent ethical principles which Silverman (2010) identifies as autonomy and non-maleficence. An invitation email and participant information sheet (see Appendix A) were sent to all members of the faculty management team, asking that they consider participating in this study. Given Antoniou et al's (2012) assertion that the amount of information desired by each potential research participant varies considerably, the information included an offer to discuss any queries or questions they may require. A consent form was used to uphold the principle of autonomy, with all interview participants given the right to withdraw at any point up until the end of the data collection phase (see Appendix B).

It is widely recognised that the interview experience can elicit distress in participants, particularly if the subject is of a sensitive nature (Corbin & Morse, 2003), however this is not the case for this study and as such it is was not anticipated that the study would cause any harm to the participants.

One aspect of the study which does pose an ethical challenge arises from the position of the researcher to the participants. As mentioned earlier, the researcher is employed within the faculty under investigation here. Mercer (2007) presents the insider/ outsider dichotomy along a continuum and, in this case, the researcher can be seen to be an insider researcher. Atkins & Wallace (2012) point out that this can pose a threat to participant privacy. The research design could also render it difficult to maintain the confidentiality of the participants in the thesis and any resultant publications, particularly if the role or position of the participant is specified. As such methodological lessons were drawn from the work of Ek, Ideland, Jönsson and Malmberg (2013) and pseudonyms are adopted alongside board terms such "manager" and "senior manager" as they lack specificity and thus offer additional protection to the participant's confidentiality. However, there were instances in which the participant's narrative included potentially identifying comments which were necessary to convey meaning, such as their area of specialty or role. Therefore, additional consent to include these comments was sought. This was made explicit in the ethics application and the participant information sheet. All identifying details such as names were removed during the transcription process and the digital and documentary data will be secured in accordance with the University of Chester data protection policy and the Data Protection Act (1998) for a period of 10 years before being destroyed.

Floyd and Arthur (2012) point out that, whilst institutional approval may offer assurance of external ethical engagement, the true ethicality of a study is determined by the researcher retaining a sense of internal ethical engagement throughout the study. In recognition of this, reflexivity was used to ensure that the ethical implications remained a key priority throughout the decision-making process.

The beneficent potential for empirical endeavours to impact upon the real world of practice (Lawrence, 2006) will be addressed via a rigorous dissemination strategy. The findings will be reported back to my own organisation as a means of informing future managerial practice, identifying supportive mechanisms and training and developmental needs of managers of professional health education. It is anticipated that this study will be the focus of a minimum of two academic publications

in peer-reviewed international journals. The findings will also be presented at relevant conferences with the aim of contributing to the existing body of knowledge and positively influencing the managerial practices of faculties of healthcare.

3.10 Chapter summary

This chapter has provided a detailed account of the methodology employed and offered a rationale in support of the methodological decisions made, justifying the interpretivist ontological position and social constructionist epistemology. The research design facilitated the collection of data drawn from multiple sources and acted as a rich pool from which to generate meaningful findings and offer a window into the experiences of managers of healthcare education engaged in ambidextrous practices within the context of their working world.

4 Chapter 4 - Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents empirical findings derived from the interpretative analysis of the case study data. Four salient themes emerged from to illuminate the lived experience of healthcare managers engaging in ambidextrous pursuits at a time of unprecedented change in the both their professional arena and the academy they serve. Each theme is sub-divided into categories exploring distinct areas of the data, as illustrated in thematic maps, in turn the categories are composed of interrelated data codes which are depicted in category maps.

4.1.1 The case

This case study focuses on a faculty of healthcare in a post 1992 university in the North West of England. The university was established in the 17th century and originally provided teacher training in association with local religious orders. The faculty of healthcare was established in 1993 in response to the introduction of Diploma and Degree Level Nurse and Midwifery education.

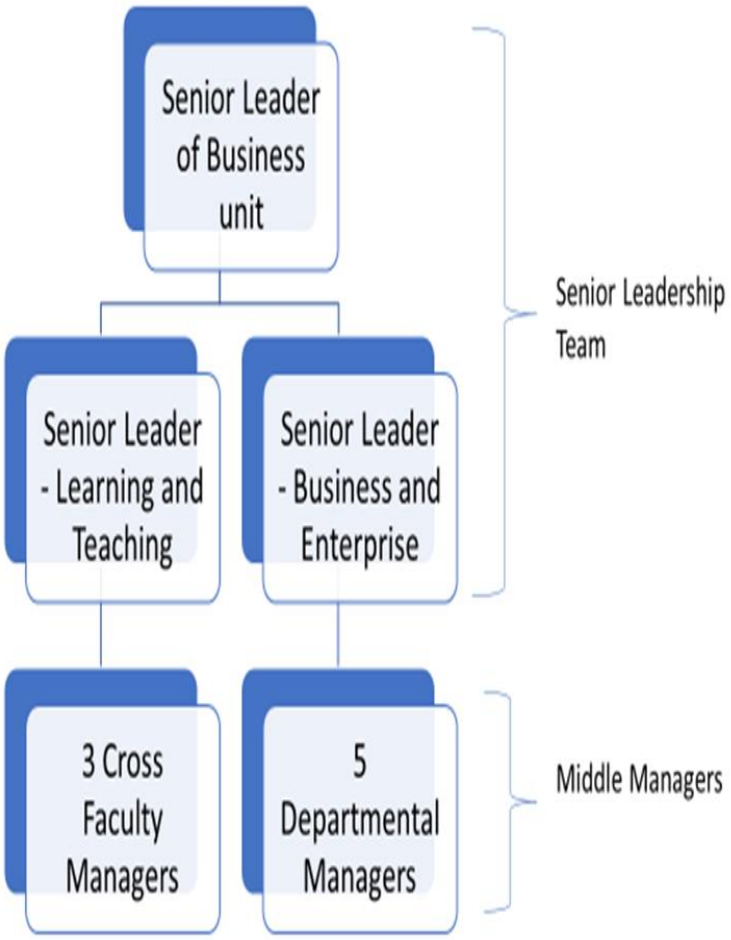
The university has grown significantly in the intervening years and the faculty of healthcare is the largest faculty in the organisation offering a diverse portfolio of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. It is a multi-campus organisation with four campuses across the region as well as a diverse range of collaborative partners, including Further Education providers and private-for-profit organisations. The undergraduate programmes on offer include all four fields of Pre-registration Nursing, BA Health and Social care, Midwifery and Social Work and attract approximately 700 full time students per year, the significant majority of whom study nursing. In addition, the faculty offer two foundation degree apprenticeships, three full-time postgraduate programmes, a taught doctorate and a PhD programme as well as a wide-range of full and part time Continuing Professional Development programmes and single modules of study.

The strategic direction of the Faculty is underpinned by the University Corporate Plan and Faculty Business Plan, and is guided by three strategic aims:

- To maintain the stability and quality of the core business and enhance the student experience and reputation of the Faculty
- To enhance research, scholarly activity, knowledge transfer and entrepreneurial endeavour
- To grow and diversify provision and partnerships, including international activity

The faculty is divided into five academic departments and two research centres. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) includes two Associate Deans who support the Executive Dean, one with responsibility for learning, teaching and quality matters and the other for business and enterprise. Each department is managed by a Head of Department supported by a Deputy Head and relevant academic programmes, collaborative partnerships, projects and research activity is housed within each department. The pre-registration adult nursing programme is the largest programme by far and differs from all other programmes in that it sits outside of the departmental structure and is, managed by a Director of Pre-registration Nursing but facilitated by staff from the departments. The faculty also incorporates a practice department led by a Director of Practice Learning who is supported by four lectures' in practice Learning. Academic staff are in specific departments, have a base at one of the four sites and commonly contribute to and even lead programmes outside their own department (beyond pre-registration nursing), which necessitates some of them to teach across multiple sites.

Figure 6 Business unit organisational structure



4.2 Theme 1: Sense-making in a complex world

The first theme resonates with the practice issues discussed in the introductory chapter of this thesis and contextualises those that follow by providing a valuable insight into the way the participants make sense of the socio-political context of the contemporary healthcare educational landscape. Change is normalised within the dialogue, its constancy accepted without question, as a natural consequence of the participants' conceptualisation of the faculty as intrinsically linked to the healthcare arena. Given the vocational nature of healthcare education, this is far from contentious, yet it goes some way to explain participants' portrayals of a recent acceleration in the pace of change for this organisational case as expressed by the following participant:

> *"you've got huge changes going on out there in our trusts …moving forward we will continue to change at a pace, I'm absolutely convinced of it" (Alex)*

Nonetheless, the emotive language embedded throughout the prose suggests that some participants tolerate, rather than appreciate, this acceleration. Further to the quote above Alex uses of the metaphor "*the onslaught*" to describe the pace of change in both the educational and health and social care landscapes.

The data also indicate that the interdependent nature of this case brings with it a degree of uncertainty:

> *"I just think that there's too much going on in health, there's too many changes going on in health and social care for us to say what we've got is enough for the next five years" (Max)*

This complex picture in this case study is compounded yet further when consideration is afforded to the transformational changes occurring across the Higher Education arena:

> *"For this last year, well the past few years I think, it has been just such a changing landscape, Health and Social Care, hasn't it? So, you've got the changing landscape in Health and Social Care, you've got the change in landscape too for HEIs and all the different political agendas and…for both, both of them …So the University, starting with the University challenges there, you've had things like the TEF and that's gonna become Subject TEF which will mean a lot of work for us and also things like the University…try and maintaining income in the light of falling numbers, in falling demographics and obviously too the drive to maintain research in light of the falling income and the falling numbers, you know, the key thing there is to ensure teaching*

> *and student experience and sometimes you have this tension between teaching and research but for the Faculty, much more than the University environment I think has been such an unstable time and clearly that is the difference in commissioning and the introduction of student fees was the biggest thing I think to hit nurse education in years if not ever." (Drew)*

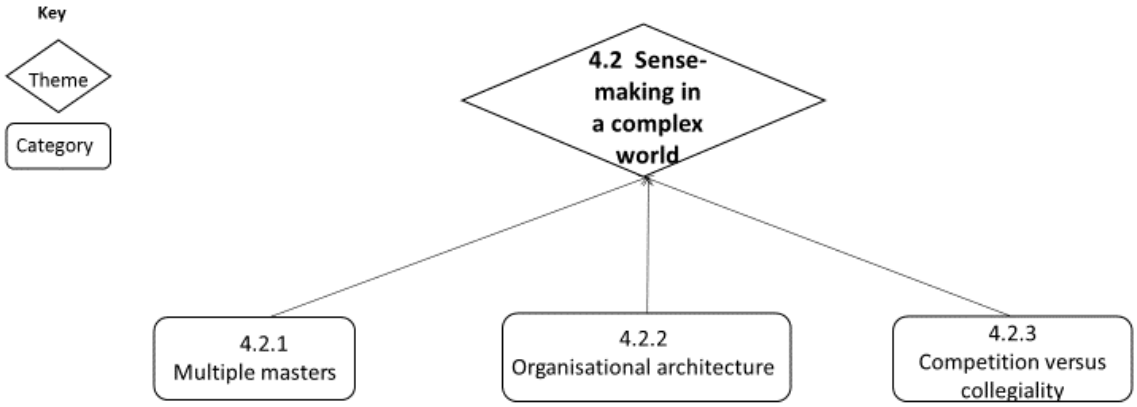
This is mirrored in the documentary case data with every Annual Report and Financial Statement between 2014 and 2017 referring to "*challenging operational environments" (ARFS, 2014-2017).* The 2016 report goes the furthest acknowledging an unprecedented degree of instability with the following opening statement:

> *"In the words of Robert F Kennedy "All of us might wish at times that we lived in a more tranquil world, but we don't. And if our times are difficult and perplexing, so are they challenging and filled with opportunity". This characterises the 2015-2016 academic session for the University of … Through its 176 years of existence, the institution has seen many changes in the national and international arena, none more so than in the current environment for British Higher Education" (ARFS, 2016: p. 6)*

The 2017 Report specifically identifies changes to healthcare education amongst the most significant challenges facing the institution. Thus, the entire case dataset can be seen to portray a shared world view in which continual change is recognised as the means by which universities and faculties of professional healthcare education ensure their relevance. This is occurring at the same time as political policies are depicted as having an unprecedented transformational impact on their world of work.

As illustrated in Figure 7, the case study data includes three specific categories which further illuminate the complexity faced by healthcare educational managers.

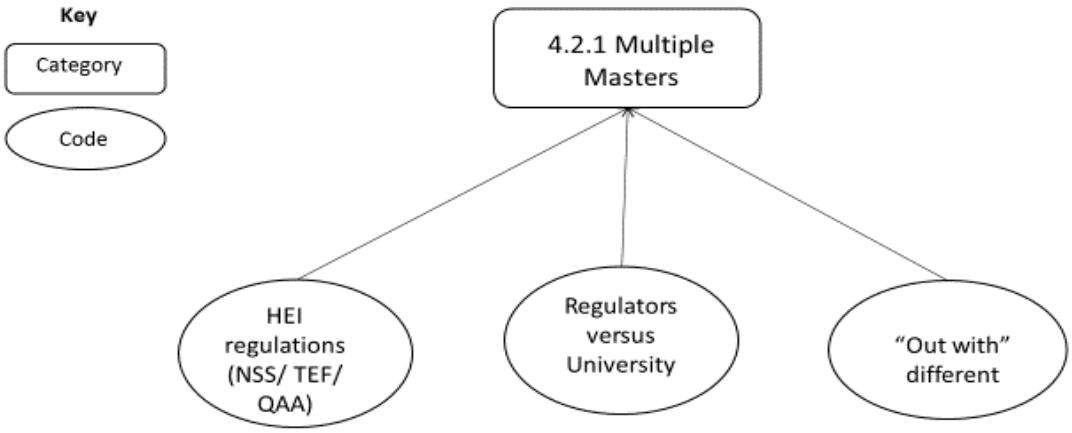
Figure 7 - Thematic map: Sense-making in a complex world



4.2.1 Category 1: Multiple masters

Analysis of the data evidences the predominant perception that the management of this case is perceived to be more complex than many other subject areas, as evidenced in the three interrelated data codes (see Figure 8).

Figure 8 - Category map: Multiple masters



Participants point to the necessity to balance the needs of multiple masters as one cause of complexity in their work. One participant makes the point that *"we've got the master of the NSS, we've got the master of the assessments and we've got the master of the workload" (Dawn). W*hist this can be seen to be reflective of the wider academic community, the management of professional healthcare curricular is conveyed as particularly complex because of the obligation to accommodate additional masters. Chief amongst these is the imperative of balancing the sometimes-dichotomous requirements of the University and professional regulatory bodies:

> *"There's a bit of conflict isn't there with our professional programmes and the university structures. It's just come out in the review about the level four, you know, being reviewed by external examiners, a requirement for the NMC but not a requirement for the university. So, there's obviously a conflict there and our masters are our regulating bodies, aren't they?" (Sam)*

In some instances, this is complicated further when educational programmes must take account of more than one regulatory body. The stipulations of professional regulators are universally regarded to be superior to those of the university, given the prerequisite for many healthcare education programmes to offer professional accreditation:

> *"the other thing with any Faculty is to ensure that it works to the University's vision and to the University's requirements in terms of regulations and before…one other thing I'll have to say obviously is that in all of this too, with our Faculty we have to ensure that we work to all the professional requirements and regulations as well because stability of our core business absolutely requires that we do so." (Drew)*

Yet the case study data indicate widespread support for one participant's contention that, as a result, *"the wider University processes that we have seem to be out with, if you like, our needs" (Alex).* The need to manage this dichotomy is portrayed as having inspired practices which see the managers, in this case, develop separate systems and processes to address any deficit or inflexibility in central university services. The reflective extract below sees one participant question whether this maladaptive approach should be challenged:

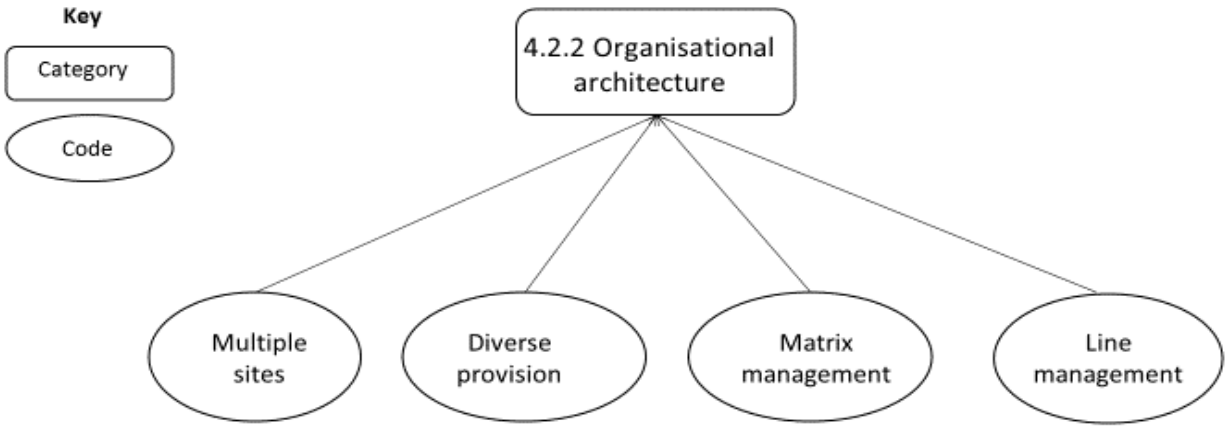
> *"I think that we over years have developed our own little idiosyncrasies to fit our professional programmes and what we should be doing is making sure that the university processes work for our needs rather than developing our own in house because I think that's why we get some of the problems that we get… think we should be a critical mass for professional programmes*

and education and dietetics and all the professional programmes should be lobbying the wider university because it does often feel like it is the tail wagging the dog and I…we're academics and we've got a professional responsibility, so our job is just as hard if not harder." (Jane)

4.2.2 Category 2: Organisational architecture

The organisational architecture of the business unit at the centre of this case is also depicted as adding to the complexity of the managerial role with emphasis placed on the four codes which make up this category as depicted in Figure 9.

Figure 9- Category map: Organisational architecture



The structure of the faculty at the centre of this case is described by Lee (participant) as adopting a "*matrix management*" system, which is perceived to add to the complexity of the managerial role for many participants. The faculty structure includes five departments responsible for a suite of programmes and projects. The pre-registration nursing programme is alone in sitting outside of this structure. Academic staff are housed within the departments but commonly contribute to programmes across the faculty. This is identified as challenging in multiple ways. Firstly, in terms of the diverse provision housed in departments, this is seen to present challenges for one participant

who grapples to fully understand a profession other than his/her own: "*As much as I try to understand it, it's not my profession is it?" (Sam).* Secondly, the pre-registration nursing programme attracts specific attention, in this organisational case, with several participants outlining the challenges of having a large programme spread across departments. Particular attention is drawn to the fact that this programme is led by a director who sits outside of the department structure and lacks line management responsibility for the staff leading or delivering the programme:

> *"it causes massive challenges… Just simple things such as…I'll give you an example, within the pre-reg programme we have…we have to monitor attrition, so I monitor…I monitor that. It goes to the programme leaders, we talk about it. We need to implement strategies to manage that attrition and, you know, to be proactive about it…One of the programme leaders decided that they would quite like to take that on as a project, so they took that on as a project and I know [Head of dept. Name] said 'you haven't got time to do that'…but I am expected to get those programme leaders to work with them and to produce the results without having the ability to say 'oi'". (Jo)*

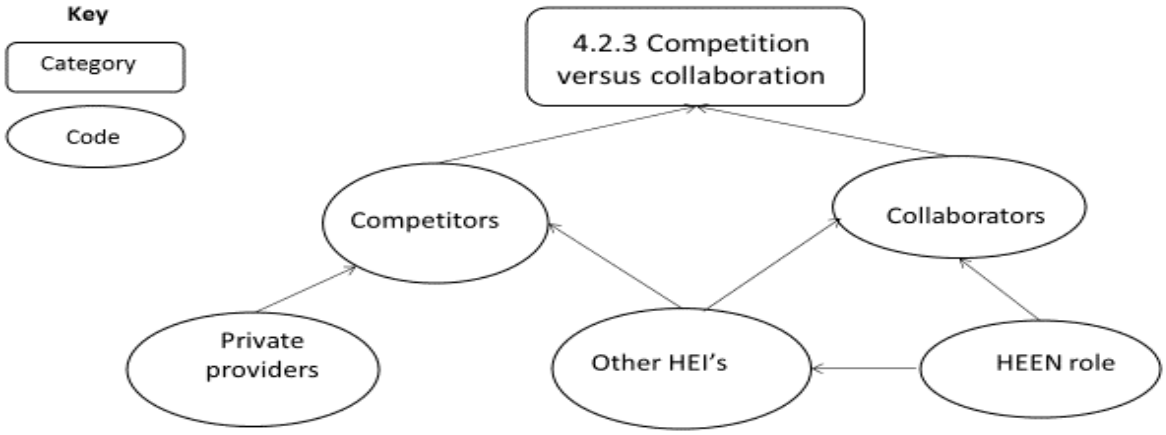
This leads Jane (participant) to assert that *"at the moment the complexity of the biggest professional programme is that it's everybody's business and nobody's business".* Furthermore, this complexity is shown to permeate the wider portfolio of provision, in the case, with several participants expressing the challenges of facilitating educational programmes that sit outside of their own department.

The Faculty at the focus of this case study is spread over four geographically separate campuses which is also widely perceived to add additional complexity in the experience of these managers, "*For me I think the sites are a big issue…cause that adds a whole different complexity" (Jane).* This is portrayed in a number of ways. Firstly, in terms of how it stifles the line management of staff based on sites remote from the manager, *"I've got people on four sites. It's hard to get around and see people "(Sam),* Secondly, in terms of how it erodes the autonomy of those academics engaged in delivering programmes that run simultaneously on multiple campuses, *"So they've got an overview of their students but not the programme cause they don't feel that they own that cause it's delivered everywhere* "*(Dawn).*

4.2.3 Category: Competition versus collaboration

Detailed analysis of the data also alludes to the emergence of an additional dichotomy, adding to the complexity of the educational landscape in this case with other providers depicted as both competitors and collaborators (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 - Category map: Competition versus collaboration



Here, participants evidence an awareness of the power of the marketisation agenda to increase competition from other HEI's and the commercial sector:

> *"Well, I mean the other development that's gonna happen fast, and is happening fast, is that there's gonna be much more competition between universities…but once post-Brexit, America's gonna be coming over here wanting to set up private universities, so you know…So, I think there's gonna be considerably more competition than we get now from the commercial Higher Education sector. You know, will we win that competition? In some areas maybe, in other areas maybe we'll lose. So, I think that…I think the…both with REF and post-Brexit there's gonna be…yeah, there's gonna be quite a…some forks in the system, big time. Some universities I think will go. Some universities will merge." (Charlie)*

This assertion is reflected in the Annual Report and Financial Statement for the year ending July 2017 which refers to:

> "*changes in the sector have included further intensification of competitive practices and in particular the wider use of unconditional offers to applicants which has made the market less predictable" (ARFS, 2017: p. 6).*

The interview data also shows that this will require new capabilities for those engaged in the management of faculties of healthcare education and raise some concerns regarding the preparedness of the faculty in this case:

> *"it's changing and so we have to be responsible er…for that. Pre-reg nursing, our key provision, I think we have to be much more business savvy and that's just come to us hasn't it, that's a contract that we've got in erm…here. We haven't had to do anything for it. I think in the next five years, even earlier than that maybe, issues with placements, with tariffs for placements, all of those sort of things that are key to pre-reg nursing provision I think will be erm…more marketable, you know, that we'll…it will be much more of an open market and we'll have to go negotiate and bid for placements and students and er…think of different ways of attracting students to our faculty, to our programmes er…yeah, I don't think we're ready for that necessarily yet, if ever." (Drew)*

Corporate organisations are commonly referred to in disparaging terms, suggesting they will seek to undercut universities in the short-term as a way of gaining entry to the market and laying the ground for profit-making over the longer term. However, the narrative around other HEI's is more nuanced, including as it does, multiple references to other HEI's in the same region as this case that are conceptualised interchangeably as local competitors, "*we will be in competition with other HEIs" (Joe),* and collaborators, "we *do a lot of collaborative working with the consortium" (Rose),* within the dialogue. This can be explained, in part, by the enduring role of the Health Education England North (HEEN) who control placements across the region. However, the extract below offers further illumination as it indicates that the faculty at the centre of this case is engaged in a careful process of balancing the need to compete in the same market at other HEI's whilst also using their collective weight as a means of influencing the national agenda:

> *"the North West Deans … you've got a body of…with a chair, of all the North West Deans who meet every two to three months and…minuted meetings, and then a follow up meeting with Health Education North on the same day with everybody sitting round. Now that's absolutely key in ensuring that we've got a collegiate view of where we want to go as North West Deans and what we perceive if there's anything left-field coming at us or if we want to make queries and a national arena then we can" (Drew)*

4.2.4 Summary

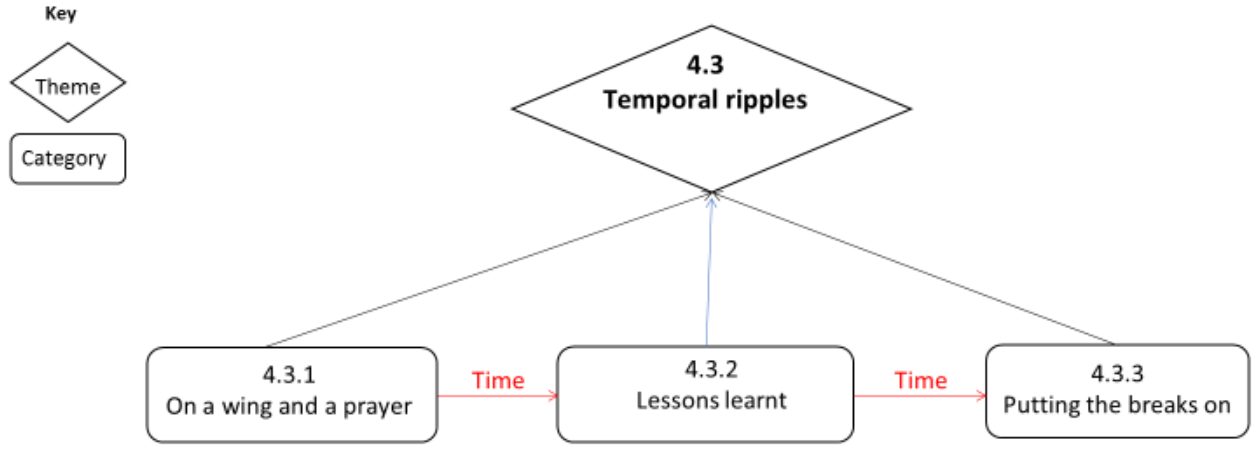
This theme conveys the ways in which managers of healthcare education, in this case, are challenged with making sense of an increasingly complex arena, in which they are required to manage a diverse range of educational provision, across multiple sites and in accordance with multiple powerful masters. The data suggest that this will call for new capabilities together with the reframing of relationships with other actors, all of which leads the following participant to consider:

> *"So you're just layering complexity, complexity, complexity. So, you've got university complexity, you've then got HEE complexity and funding, you've then got a government and policy complexity, you've then got professional regulations, you've then got faculty needs and relationships and stakeholders, you've then got student needs. So…and then you've got the sites. So, it's just layer, upon layer, upon layer, upon layer of complexity and as a faculty we have tried in numerous ways to unpick that complexity and I don't know whether it's possible" (Jane)*

4.3 Theme 2: Temporal ripples

Taken together the archival documentary case data and the participants narratives depict a temporality at the heart of their experiences of managing the dual ambidextrous imperative of developing new capabilities and enhancing current ones, affording a valuable insight into the evolution of the faculty over the past four years. The three categories which make up this theme offer a chronology of the managers' experiences of ambidextrous practice and the lessons learnt (see Figure 11).

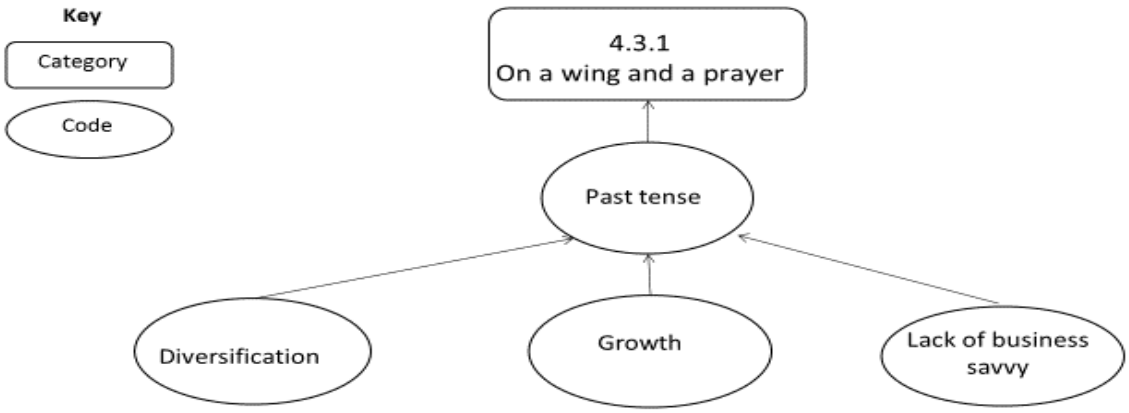
Figure 11 - Thematic map: Temporal ripples



4.3.1 Category 1: On a wing and a prayer

The first category in this theme offers an insight into the managers experiences of pursuing an explorative strategic priority in recent years. This period is characterised as a time of rapid growth and diversification across the entire dataset as evidenced by the codes which make up this category of the data (see Figure 12).

Figure 12 - Category map: On a wing and a prayer



The wider organisational financial records indicate that university revenue steadily increased between 2014 and 2017 the surplus declined over the same period (ARFS, 2014-2017). This is explained by the strategic intent to adopt an explorative priority coupled with a focus on efficiency:

> *"the university is taking measures to minimise costs and maximise efficacies…The university has been modelling and preparing for constraints in public funding and in addition is looking to increase other income streams to ensure that it generates sufficient surplus for reinvestment in the increasing asset base" (ARFS, 2014: p. 9).*

Later reports identify the focus of exploration to be as follows:

> *"continued investment in the … site; the further development of a Higher Education presence in {Location}, the opening of a new Business and Management faculty in central {Location}…the continued development of undergraduate Medical provision" (ARFS, 2016: p. 7)*

The initial success of this strategy is substantiated by the archive data that immortalise a period of accelerated expansion in the case in relation to new academic partners, international activity, bids, projects and new curricular, between 2014 and 2016 (BEKT minutes, 2014-16). Yet, the following extract reflects the wider dataset in support of the inference that, for this case, this period was also characterised by a lack of strategic clarity and a degree of naivety regarding the decision-making process:

"my experience was erm…that things were haphazard…er…some things were gone for without any real awareness of er…you know, what's the business reasoning for this, how much money will we bring, what are the resource implications? So it was quite often opportunistic, you know, a conversation with a conversation with somebody who'd had a conversation with somebody and they'd said that might be a good idea erm…and you go for it and then…see if I think about the [subject], that…that almost took on a life of its own…certainly near the start…, without anybody going, is this a good idea? I'm including myself in that…somebody flashes a bit of money at you and says, 'oh we've got forty grand or something… Yeah, we could do that'. Like a wing and a prayer, just opportunistic, haphazard" (Max)

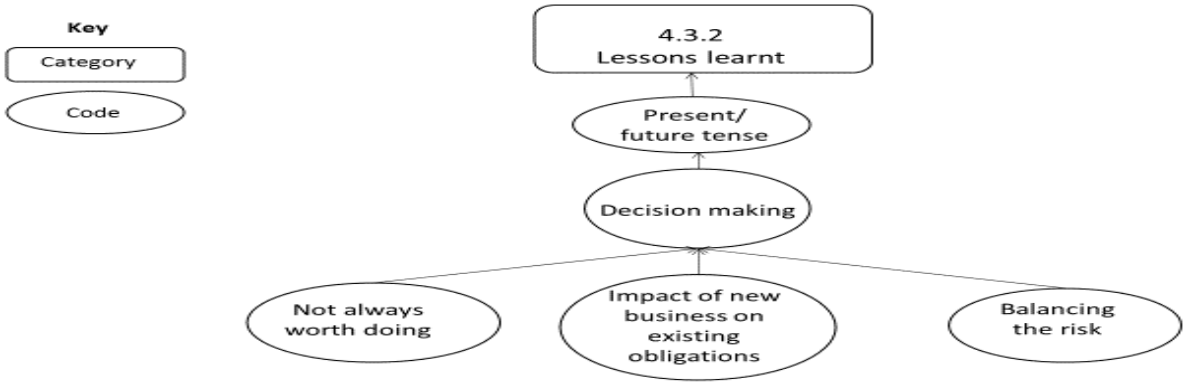
Thus, the data clearly evidence the historical success of this case in terms of their explorative intent to grow new business, but also implies that this may not have generated additional revenue much less resulted in additional resources and participants typically identify their own lack of a business acumen as a limitation in this regard:

"but we have in the past done quite a lot of international work that has cost erm…money and hasn't brought money back in and I'm not saying we shouldn't do that but I think what we need to do is be up front about what the cost is and then acknowledge the benefit of that in terms of student exchanges, staff exchanges" (Jo)

4.3.2 Category 2: Lessons learnt

The narrative data evidence that significant learning has been derived from these experiences and suggests that the Faculty management team has undergone something of a philosophical shift away from a perception of 'all and any growth' denoting success, towards a more measured approach regarding the relative merits of explorative endeavours, as illustrated by Figure 13.

Figure 13 - Category map: Lessons learnt



The managers in this case evidence a growing awareness that new business is not necessarily intrinsically beneficial as evidenced by one participants consideration that:

> "*how much effort then you put in to developing that because we've learnt over time that some of the courses just are not worth…are not worth doing" (Sam)*

Significant lessons have also been drawn regarding the importance of a thorough risk-benefit analysis of explorative endeavours, taking account of more than just the potential to generate profit:

> *"So, I think we need to be very open and honest about the amount of work that something takes to set something up and the risks associated with not doing it well and then we need to balance that with the income but we also need to balance that with is that income gonna generate" (Dawn)*

This accords with the University Partnership and International strategy (2016-2020) which claims that:

> *"Working together we will…Develop expertise within Faculties and service areas to enable swift appraisal of opportunities and the secure management of both home and overseas provision and ensure risk analysis procedures for new partners are fully addressed and cover academic, commercial, legal and reputational risk" (PIS, 2016-2020: p. 2-3)*

However, the interview participants clearly perceive the explorative and exploitative paradigms as drawing on shared resources for the case and identify this as a possible risk of explorative engagement within the market, alluding to *"you're working within the same resources you've got" (Linda).* A point that is elucidated further later in this participant's dialogue:

> *"if we do any more new business, which we will always will end up doing, that's going to start effecting our core programmes cause we've kind of taken it if you like, in terms of that workload" (Alex)*

Indeed, there is some evidence to suggest that the explorative focus during a time of austerity may have begun to have a deleterious effect on exploitative aspects of business performance for the case:

> *"basic fundamental quality maybe …hasn't been as good while we've been out looking for lots of disparate business opportunities" (Max)*

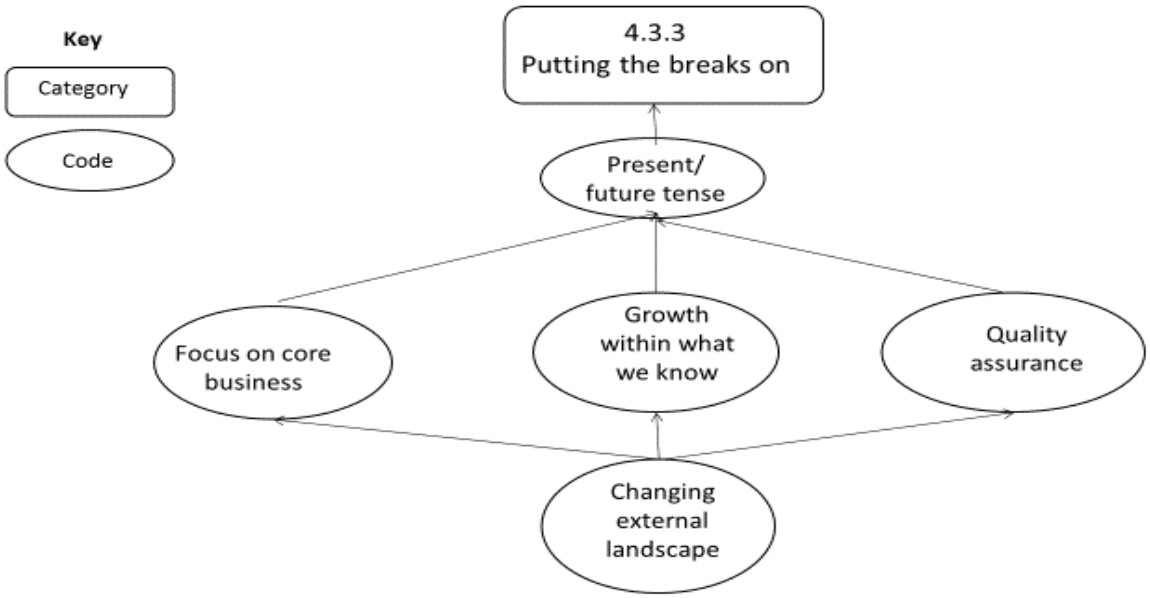
This reflects the wider data in suggesting that this period of rapid growth has afforded the participants an insight into the potential risk to the whole business unit of failing to establish a balance between exploration and exploitation. This can be seen to have inspired a desire to integrate the structural ambidextrous way in which responsibilities are divided across the senior management team:

Participant: "I work alongside another person whose remit is much more about business, but we have had discussions just recently about how you can't actually separate the two. So, you can't think of education provision and business opportunities without thinking about the quality of implications of that as well. So, we're starting to talk now about both doing one to one meeting with say heads of department with a focus erm…on both business and quality. So, we have much more of a sort of holistic view of what's going in departments.
Interviewer: "How does that differ to previous…is that new, is that...?"
Participant: "I think it's been separate. So, there's been a sort of…the Associate Dean for business will look at business opportunities within departments, business opportunities across the faculty and certainly... my perception looking in as a Head of Department was that they were very disjointed, and the Associate Deans were those two things…Bringing together quality and business. So erm... we'll look at how we bring those two things together." (Max)

4.3.3 Category 3: Putting the brakes on

Several participants in this case study describe a recent sea change in the strategic direction of the faculty with exploitation and quality enhancement taking precedence as a consequence of the changing external landscape. This category outlines the present and future strategic imperatives of the faculty with an emphasis on exploitation as illustrated in the three interrelated data codes entitled "Focus on core business", "Growth within what we know" and "Quality assurance" (see Figure 14).

Figure 14 - Category map: Putting the breaks on



This is aptly described by one participant thus:

> *"Currently I think… I think we are maybe less inclined about new business and more inclined to think about quality assurance issues. I think the brakes have been put on a little bit." (Max)*

This reflects the strategic direction documented within the archive data, which identifies how the dual ambidextrous aims of 2016 *"the priority of keeping the core business stable while growing and diversifying as much as possible" (FMG notes 2.2.16)* shifted towards an exploitative priority by 2017, *"Income from FT UG [Full time undergraduate] students, recruitment and retention are a priority" (FMG notes 7.4.17).* Yet this is problematised by some participants in this case whose experiences of the current context do not suggest a slowing down in the rate of growth and expansion. The following excerpt supports the documentary case data to suggest that the pace of growth persists, with a shift of focus towards exploitative endeavours:

> *"I think we're certainly focussed on growing business. I think if there was an opportunity that we missed I think people wouldn't be very chuffed about that. I think diversification…within the scope of what we know is what we're working to do now" (Sam)*

4.3.4 Summary

This theme portrayed the experiences of Managers of professional health education in this case study working across ambidextrous boundaries. It suggests that many valuable lessons have been learnt from engaging in the explorative domain, which may serve these actors well amidst an increasingly hypercompetitive market. The theme also identifies a temporality in their experience of ambidexterity, with recent instability in the income generated from the core provision and hypercompetition in the health care education market inspiring a swing towards exploitation. However, the distinction between the two paradigms appears blurred: participants draw a clear division between managing the staff and programmes within their departments (exploitation) and developing new business (exploration). Furthermore, they evidence an acute awareness of a recent change in strategic direction, away from developments which represent diversification, in favour of

those that reflect the workforce needs of existing stakeholders. Initiatives aimed at meeting local workforce needs are shown to commonly draw on existing capabilities, although utilised in different contexts i.e. the development of apprenticeships and new healthcare roles, yet they have several features in common with previous explorative endeavours including a future orientation, income generation and the development of new provision and as such they are conceptualised in much the same way (explorative). This indicates that within this case study the two paradigms are not experienced as orthogonal but rather along a continuum with activities drawing on a combination of new and existing capabilities to a lesser or greater extent. The complex and interdependent nature of exploitation and exploration is also evident in the University Knowledge and Transfer Strategy (2013-2017) which identifies an intent to generate explorative gains from exploitative relationships:

> *"Relationships built up through teaching should lead to strong partnerships with bodies with whom the University engages in knowledge transfer, contract research and consultancy" (KTS, 2013-2017: p. 1)*

Conversely, the respondents, in this case, report a very different experience, more recently, in which they feel obliged to engage in explorative endeavours, sometimes at a loss, to retain and enhance relationships for the benefit of exploitation (see 'charming the pants off them': p. 107). When considered in relation to Theme 1, sense making in a complex world, it is also evident that the recent period of rapid growth has left a legacy contributing towards the complexity of provision, which these actors are tasked with managing.

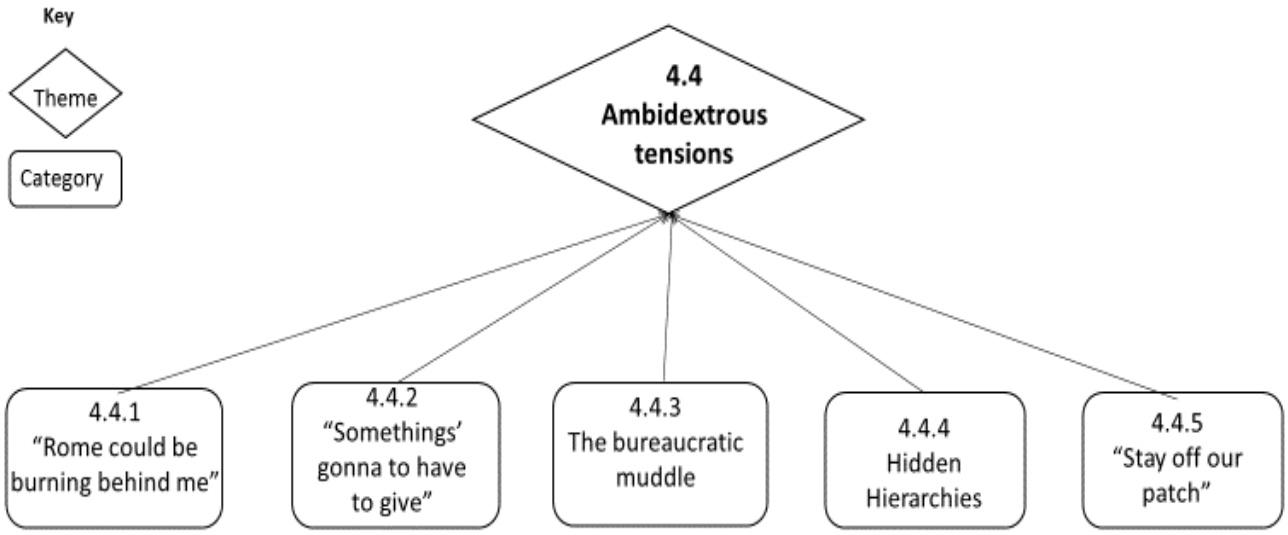
4.4 Theme 3: Ambidextrous tensions

The third theme to emerge from analysing the case data affords further support to the contention that the dual facets of ambidexterity are an established feature in the practice of academic healthcare managers in this case study. Managing the dual imperatives of exploration and exploitation is problematised throughout the data with and the tensions manifesting at the level of departmental heads, illustrated by the following participant:

> *"I think the hardest part is for the heads of department who are the people who are juggling both for their department and I think they have probably got the hardest job in doing both" (Jo)*

The following categories (depicted in Figure 15) represent the way in which the ambidextrous tensions are nested throughout this case and manifested in the experiences of the participants and provide a context in which to interpret the ambidextrous tactics they employ.

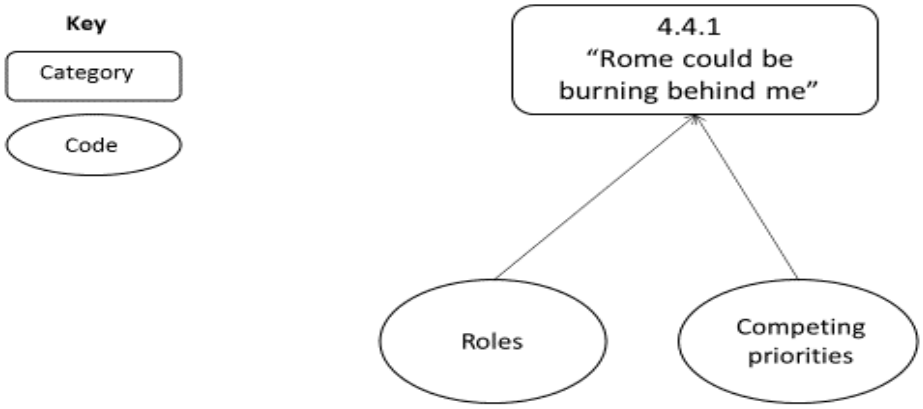
Figure 15 - Thematic map: Ambidextrous tensions



4.4.1 Category 1: Rome could be burning behind me

The first category in this theme focuses on the tension of managing competing priorities when enacting contextual ambidexterity (see Figure 16).

Figure 16: Category map – Rome could be burning behind me



Analysis of the organisational job description for heads of department in this case supports the contention that contextual ambidexterity is an expectation of these employees, as evidenced by the following excerpt:

> *"The Head of Subject is accountable to the Dean of Faculty for…academic leadership of the subject area, including all programmes and modules therein, and oversight of all associated curriculum development, teaching, learning, and research…Liaise with external contacts such as other educational bodies, employer, professional bodies and other providers of funding and research initiatives to foster collaboration and generate income as appropriate." (JD1)*

Thus, the key challenge of managing the two competing strategic imperatives i.e. maintaining current capabilities while developing new ones, emanates from the contextualised nature of ambidexterity in the way the role of heads of department are perceived in this case:

> *"I'm out there you know almost like acquiring new business erm a bit like an account manager in financing your keeping people happy, you know and making sure that we're responding to Directors of Nursing and Heads of Education's agendas and so forth, which is all a great job and a needed job but at the same time if I focus too much on that Rome could be burning behind me." (Lee)*

This participant's experience resonates throughout the narrative data, indicating that contextual ambidexterity engenders tensions for these actors. Specifically, they raise concerns that their exploratory focus may be detrimental in terms of their exploitative responsibilities. This category is also closely related to that which follows and is portrayed as a the most dominant tension faced by these participants in this case focusing, as it does, on the management of the academy's key resource, staff time.

4.4.2 Category 2: Somethings' gonna have to give

This category evidences the conceptualisation that exploration and exploitation draw on shared resources and inspiring multiple tensions as depicted in Figure 17.

Figure 17 - Category map: Somethings' gonna to have to give

When asked about the challenges or tensions they face in their work, the dominant response amongst participants was to identify a lack of available staff time to meet the demands of their existing commitments much less take on more, as articulated by the following participant:

> *"I don't think we've got much slack left. I think we've done it and we've done it, we've overstretched people's workloads… I think if we went any further then that quality would start to diminish definitely, and people are starting to comment now 'enough is enough', that's it.*

We can't…if we do anything else, which we will always do something else, but something else is gonna have to give." (Rose)

This was also seen as a barrier to the research activity of the faculty:

"*I think it's…I think it's capacity isn't it that…that it stops income generation and commercial activity in non-research active universities. We just don't have spare capacity" (Charlie).*

An explanation for this can be found in the archival data which indicates that in this case the recent period of rapid growth was not coupled with an investment in resources; rather it coincided with an austerity drive as typified by the following extract:

"Budget - imperative for savings including:
i) Efficiencies in Faculty staffing
ii) University efficiencies - QR funding; LIS initiatives, international conferences, non-allocation of funding from Appendix B of Business Plan requests
iii) In-year Faculty efficiencies to stay in budget - 5% cut in non-staffing
iv) Schedule 8 - 40% cut in CPD. Awaiting confirmation that NMP staying stable…
vii) Central contribution - looking like this year will mirror last year's - 45.6% - £7.8 million, ? ways to increase" (FMG notes, 1.4.16)

For this case this can be seen to have inspired a risk adverse approach to future growth with resources dependent upon sustained income and future projections rather than invested as a means of accumulating future profit, a business model which is articulated as follows:

"I think…if it does follow it it's down the line so we take a hit at the start and familiar with loss leaders and all the rest of it sometimes you have to do that don't you? Or if you're talking about key provision like nursing associates or assistant practitioners or, you know, key things that we're thinking could be some future in this and…for a long sort of future in it then…I think we need to plan more because that's where quality will suffer back to where people take the squeeze in terms of workload and you get knackered and you've given people lots of different provision that they're stepping in to but given them all the responsibilities. So, you know, one module in nursing associates and three in pre-reg and then two modules in erm…I don't, BA in Health & Social Care, that's a lot of work that follows all of those different programmes" (Max)

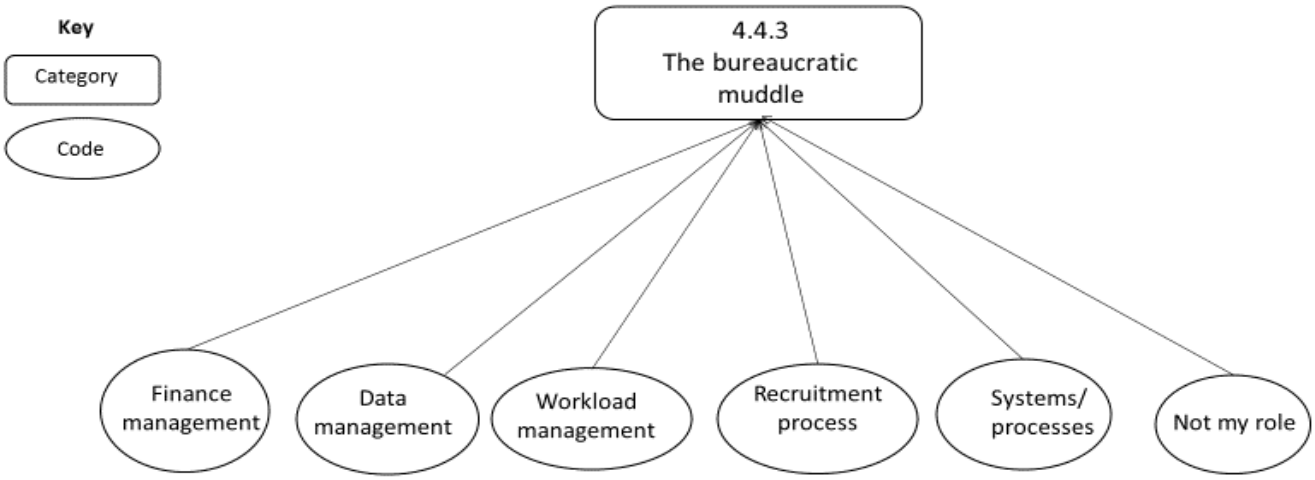
Here, the participant can be seen to allude to an additional vestige of rapid growth i.e. the diversification of the work allocated to individual academics and the consequential impact on the complexity and efficiency of their work. This is considered to have a delirious effect across all areas of engagement including staff wellbeing, *"I think people are stressed" (Lee).*

Another component of resource management that attracts frequent criticism is the workload management process itself, which is considered alongside wider aspects of the faculty and university infrastructure and processes in the following category.

4.4.3 Category 3: The bureaucratic muddle

This category outlines managers' experiences of relying on University systems and processes in their pursuit of contextual ambidexterity and evidences several tensions emerging from workload management, financial systems, data management and recruitment process (see Figure 18).

Figure 18 - Category map: The bureaucratic muddle



The pervasive nature of these tensions is evident in the frequency with which respondents depict their role as *"to work through the bureaucracy" (Jo)* "or *"muddle through the system" (Linda).*

In this case study the workload management system attracts particular attention. Despite the inclusion of *"the extent to which workforce planning and succession planning are embedded in the university*" as a key performance indicator in the University People Management and Development Strategy (2010-2015), criticism abound, particularly in terms of the systems predictive limitations:

> *"Previous and current workload models are retrospective recording of workload as opposed to workforce…workload planning tools. So that's…I think that's a major hindrance." (Jo)*.

Financial management also attracts distinct criticism both in terms of representing a perceived deficit in some managers knowledge base and an area in which they experience a lack of autonomy and control. The extract below outlines the frustration experienced by one participant attempting to manage a project budget:

> *"I've never had any problem bringing the money in and I've never had any problem spending the money. My problem is knowing what I've got in the bank. Our financial systems are not good so the analogy I've used often when I'm talking to people in finance is: we're at the end of the month, my bank sends me a statement which tells me how much I had in the bank at the beginning of the month and how much I had in at the end of the month and the difference between the two is articulated line by line in terms of what I've spent, how much I've spent at Tesco, how much I've spent in petrol, etc., etc. I get the same from this University, but I only get what was in the beginning of the month and what's at the end. It doesn't tell me what I've spent." (Charlie)*

An additional tension arises from the inflexibility embedded in the university finance management system which the following participant considers unsuitable for third-stream income:

> *"The biggest drawback the biggest barrier in this faculty to innovation for example, to those sort of things… the RO1 process. We have a process that might work well for research where you lay your stall out at the end and you don't change it until its finished and it has a defined finish date that does not work for innovation. If you have an innovative project it is by its nature, it's iterative, you will change it as you go along as you, I know I was gonna spend money on that and now I'm not gonna I'm gonna spend money on this, you know, and you can't do that with an RO1 you have to keep changing the RO1 or somebody and its always this they, I can't find out who the hell they are, say 'no'. And it's like 'hang on its not your bloody money, what do you mean I can't employ another administrator to deal with the increasing workload?' which is what we've got with [Project name] at the minute." (Lee)*

This also illustrates the challenges that managers in this case face when trying to adopt contextual ambidexterity and use the income generated via explorative activities to expand their available resources and off-set the potential impact of their exploitative endeavours. In stark contrast to the University People Management and Development Strategy (2010-2015) aim to develop *"recruitment strategies, selection methods and talent management processes which will ensure that the right quality of people join and remain with the University" (PMDS, 2010-2015: p. 5),* the recruitment process is depicted as lengthy and inflexible to the detriment of time sensitive projects. The significance of this inflexibility cannot be underestimated, as evidenced by the following manager who

adopts the role of project leader because of their inability to embed this explorative project into the exploitative domain:

> *"I spend far too much time running two projects now, I've got rid of one, two projects one being the [NAME]…. and the [NAME}, they should have program leaders in place, but this university seems to have err a policy of delaying RA's [Recruitment Authorisation's] to leave a surplus at the end that they can skim off. So, I've ended up doing that job …it means I don't get enough time to spend I think on the real job which is my Head of…" (Lee)*

Managers experience of gathering data regarding their educational programmes is also identified as a tension of specific relevance to the exploitative paradigm for this case:

> *"getting that data was really difficult. There's very little confidence that it was totally accurate all the time and so that's quite challenging isn't it cause you want staff to feel that you're truly representing their programme and their data but they're going 'well that's not true, we've had more of those students.' So, some of that managing data I think and how all the databases talk to each other" (Linda)*

There is also a growing recognition that the accuracy of this data is of increasing importance given the emphasis on calculability in contemporary Higher Education:

> *"I think it is having data readily that you can use and certainly TEF requires much more data and metrics that I'm not sure it always feeds in as easily as it can" (Linda)*

Performance management is also experienced as challenging and is portrayed as presenting additional pressures on departmental workloads:

> *"if you've got an issue with a member of staff that, you know, we talk about performance managing and it's something that we talk about at FMG all the time. OK, well we need to performance manage them then. Well if you've ever tried to performance manage anybody you know that all the work comes back, you know, that…immediately someone is under performing, you go to HR, you say, you know, these are the issues. People will say 'well I'm too stressed then', you know, and so HR will say 'well they need their workload reducing', which just…it's just pointless…I find really tricky. So, I try and keep people on a keel without going down that route because it's been so frustrating in the past to do that" (Sam)*

This area of the case data suggests that the universities systems, processes and infrastructure has yet to evolve in line with the changing landscape of Higher Education, impeding ambidexterity, a point which is illustrated by the following participants experience of converting an existing programme into an apprenticeship:

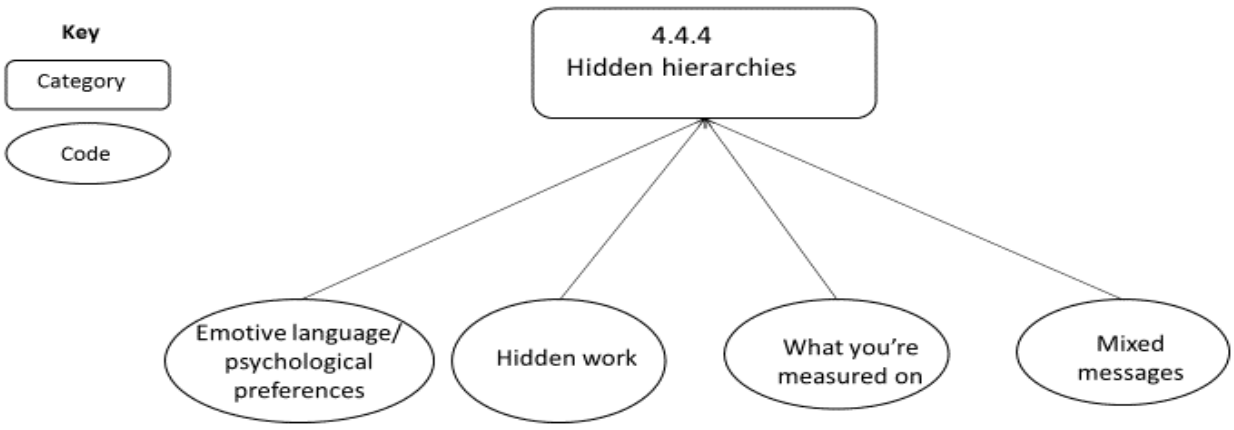
> *"there's been erm…huge barriers with the university structures because the university wasn't set up to develop apprenticeships" (Sam).*

In addition to the specific systems and processes outlined above, some of the participants in this case express a sense of frustration about the time spent navigating their way through the university systems. This is conveyed by the following manager who offers an account of an interview day for which she had to go out and purchase biscuits and milk in order to be able to provide refreshments to interviewers from local stakeholder organisations, *"It is a pathetic thing but when you can't even order a cup of tea, you know, you're trying to get forty students in at twelve grand each and you can't get a cup of coffee" (Sam).* This sentiment is shared by another participant who decries, *"I'm sorry but I'm doing meaningless shit that's not my role, the way I see it" (Jane).*

4.4.4 Category 4: Hidden hierarchies

This category alludes to a hidden hierarchy regarding the importance placed on different facets of the managerial role and is composed of four data codes as illustrated in Figure 19.

Figure 19 - Category map: Hidden hierarchies



Akin to the wider literature that considers ambidexterity, the emotive language nested throughout the interview discourse indicates a dissonance between managers' perception of the explorative and exploitive components of their role. In some instances, this is dictated by the specific remit of their

position; however, for departmental heads this is subtler. A preference for exploration can be inferred by the emotive language employed, coupled with extensive experience of exploration. Here, exploitation is referred to as "fire-fighting" *(Alison, Dawn), "operational" (Alison, Linda)* and even "*turgid" (Lee*). While exploration is described as "strategic*" (Sam, Jane, Alison, Linda)* and "external facing" (*Lee, Alison, Jane, Linda).* Some managers go on to explicitly articulate their preference for exploration in the following terms: *"I love all of that. I get excited by all of that" (Jane), "its shiny and new" (Dawn)*, "*the nice bit of the job … The bit I really like that's the enjoyable bit" (Lee).* Conversely, others indicate an exploitative preference by conveying a lack of enthusiasm for exploration and a predominant focus on exploitative endeavours:

> *"certainly, for me some people just seem to come across as being more business savvy cause I wouldn't say at all that I'm business savvy whatsoever. Nor have I in the past been particularly interested in being, you know, getting business and making money. That isn't what makes me tick and it isn't why I came to education" (Max)*

In addition, the data uncover a degree of discord with participants appearing to struggle to articulate their priorities which infers a hidden hierarchical value placed on exploration and exploitation. Dawn (participant), for example, explicitly states her perception that "*business is king"* inferring an explorative emphasis but also acknowledges an exploitative priority thus; "*my ultimate responsible I see is the pre-registration nursing because that is the pipeline for our future workforce*".

This confusion regarding the value placed on exploration and exploitation is evident throughout the data set with quality metrics such as the NSS and TEF are explicitly identified as driving a focus on undergraduate provision at an organisational level, where explorative work is conceptualised *as "hidden work, it's not captured by the university" (Jane),* yet the data indicates that exploration is highly valued at the business unit level. The following extract is taken from one of the managers as he/she grapples with this dichotomy:

> Participant: "following the business planning meetings that the heads have had, I've really thought about whether I should continue doing what I'm doing."
> Interviewer: "Why?"

> Participant: "Because when we've looked at the business plans, other departments with one programme…"
> Interviewer: "Oh right"
> Participant:"…is in a much stronger light and the quality of their provision is much stronger and cohesive and I'm running round the countryside and although it's making an impact in the workplace and it's making an impact to my staff cause they love doing it because it's their subject specialism, it's seen…not in the faculty, the faculty see it is as important and valued because they understand the importance of those links and relationships."
> Interviewer: "Yeah"
> Participant: "So, it's valued in the faculty, a 100% valued in the faculty, it's when you look down to the nuts and bolts of programmes, offers, tracking, progression, that work in a way seems…is that worth the energy?" (Jane)

One consequence of this lack of clarity emerges the following extract which sees one manager express concern that his/ her colleagues' allocation of resources does not reflect the importance of the dominant programme in this case:

> "So sometimes if you've got a chance of new business and you've got a really good member of staff, I feel that they will direct that new member of staff towards that new business more so than to Pre-reg because for them they're measured on that new business. So, they have to do what's right for them and their department which impacts on quality for Pre-reg… I think we've got a bit of a negative view of our undergraduate programmes… Pre-reg is, anyone can teach them, so it doesn't matter. Cut your teeth on Pre-reg then go and do something new… and I think we reinforce that all the time" (Dawn)

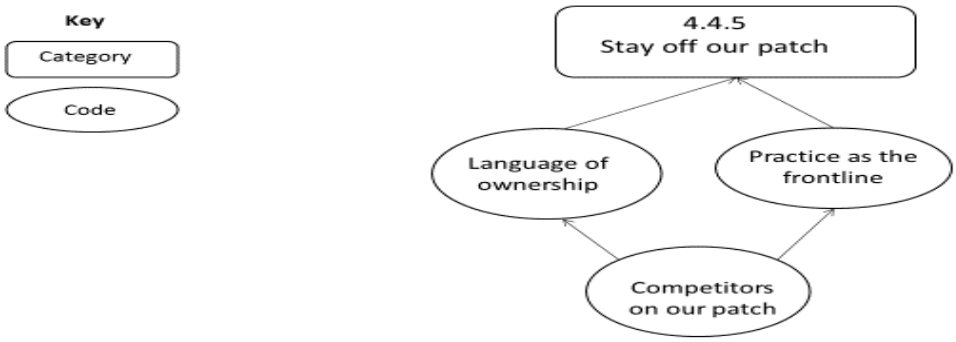
Support for practice learning attracts minimal attention in both the archival and narrative data affording support for one participants perception that this is situated yet further down the hierarchy:

> *"supporting practice learning there's no… there doesn't seem to be a lot of give. Whereas in teaching it might be can you cover for and I'd say 'yeah, I'll cover for you' but if I said 'look, I've got a crisis in practice, could you go out and see that student', its … 'oh well I don't know whether I can'." (Rose)*

4.4.5 Category 5: Stay off our patch

The final cause of ambidextrous tension to emerge from this case study owes less to the organisational systems and processes and more to the emerging marketisation agenda in healthcare education (see Figure 20).

Figure 20 - Category map: Stay off our patch



Throughout the dialogue the participants in this case employ a language of ownership when discussing local healthcare organisations, employing terms such as "*our patch*" *(Rose, Alex),* "*our placement circuit" (Dawn)* and "*our capacity*" *(Dawn).* The following excerpt offers an insight into the way in which these respondents conceptualise local organisations as key to the future viability of the faculty provision and the front line in the battle to protect their market share:

> *"we've all kept to our patches pretty much. We kept to our patch because the commissioners controlled that and because it's been neat to do that. Well, there is no commissioning now. People aren't gonna keep to their patches and we've already had, you know, a private company from London come and ask us if we would validate their programmes to be delivered in London…So, we have to be aware that there are gonna be private competitors, private people, …are much more business savvy so they're aware of loss leaders and all of those kind of things, getting their foot in to the market" (Dawn)*

The concern that competitors may seek to infiltrate the market by developing relationships with local organisations is not limited to private corporations, as the following participant indicates below;

> *"Yeah cause basically we had an issue with [Local HEI] there. One of their academics had gone out to [Local organisation] and was walking the course cause... and they wanted to meet me to talk about what our capacity was in and I said 'I'm not meeting you to discuss that, our capacity is our capacity. If you want additional capacity and we've got space, we can give it to you, but you need to ask us'." (Rose)*

Several respondents also expressed little faith that the regional agreement between HEI's will maintain the stability of the placement circuit in the long-term:

> *"We have this, it's not a partnership agreement but it's kind of like a partnership practice arrangement where everybody's supposed be seen to be nice to everybody. For this year only*

and then next year probably the handbags and boxing gloves are gonna be off and we're gonna be fist fighting (laughs)" (Rose)

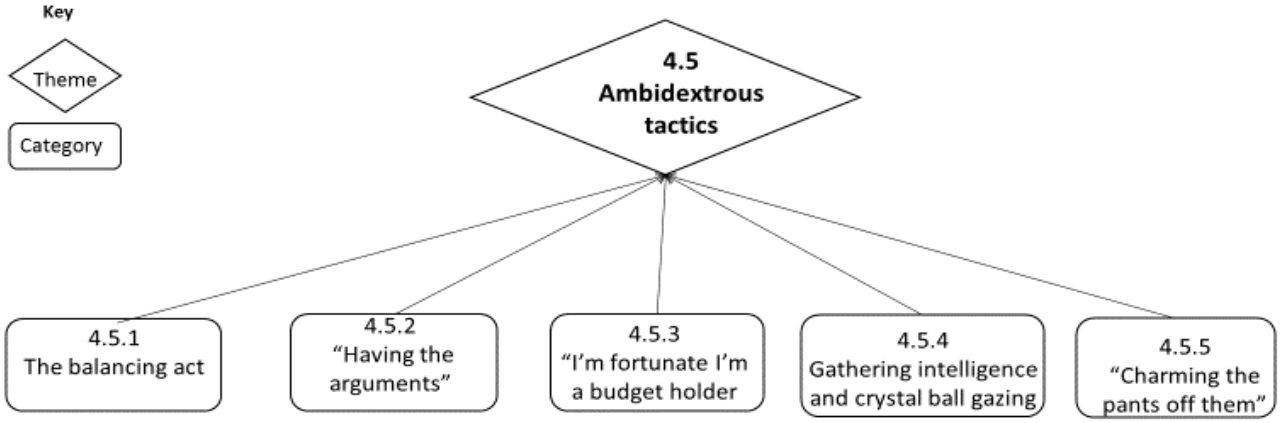
4.4.6 Summary

This theme presented key findings that indicate that ambidextrous tensions are nested throughout the business unit at the centre of this case study, but that it is within the contextualised nature of ambidexterity in the role of the Departmental Heads that they are felt most acutely. The managers convey their experiences of trying to balance this duality and manage finite resources to best effect. A lack of discretionary slack and financial autonomy coupled with inefficient and inflexible organisational systems inspire further tensions, while hierarchal undercurrents influence the way in which this is enacted. These tensions act as powerful motivators, compelling the managerial team to develop new strategies and tactics to support contextual ambidextrous practice which is explored in the next theme.

4.5 Theme 4: Ambidextrous tactics

The case study data depict an organisation in the process of transforming its managerial practices and systems as a means of responding to the educational landscape (discussed in Theme 1) and the tensions this has inspired, (discussed in Theme 3). The following categories elucidates the tactics they have developed to assure their efficacy amidst this complex context (see Figure 21).

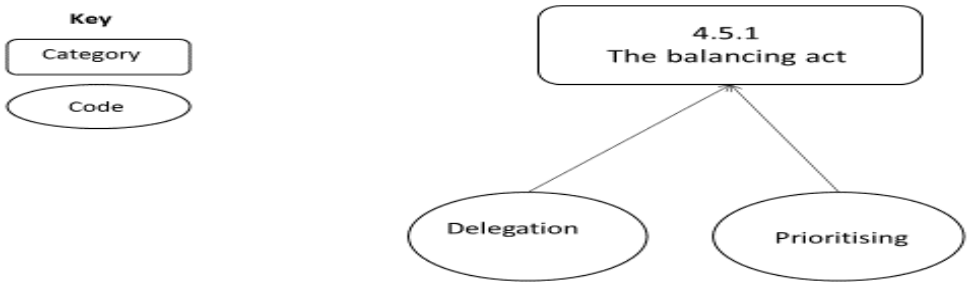
Figure 21 - Thematic map: Ambidextrous tactics



4.5.1 Category 1: The balancing act

The first category conveys the strategies the managers in this case adopt as a means of balancing the dual imperatives at the heart of contextual ambidexterity (see Figure 22).

Figure 22 - Category map: The balancing act



Delegation emerges as a key tactic here, with responsibility for maintaining the quality of existing provision disseminated across Deputy Heads of Department and Programme Leaders;

> *"I…as Head …and still now have been looking for new business…and I would internally delegate a lot of the teaching and the quality assurance and that would be through my Deputy Head and through my programme leaders" (Linda)*

Dissemination of responsibility for educational modules, programmes and projects is presented as a key means of empowering academics to take ownership of exploitative endeavours. This affords those in managerial positions the freedom to adopt an exploratory focus, thus, reinforcing the exploratory priority identified in category 4.5.4. However, this structural divide is not substantiated by the job descriptions of Heads and Deputy Heads (JD1, JD2) and as such can be seen to be a tactic stemming from custom and practice rather than dictated from an organisational level. Furthermore, some participants identify several central flaws to this approach:

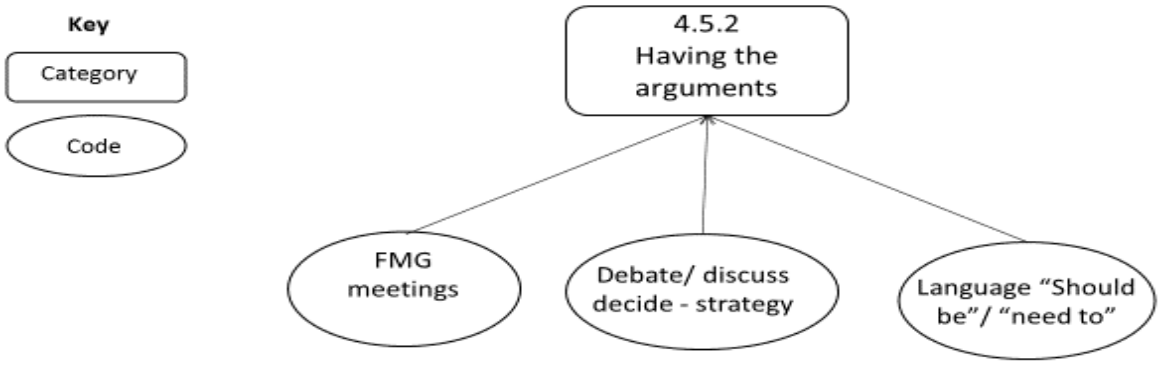
> *"So as far, to go back to your question about maintaining the quality, how I do it is by good use of my deputy, clear distinction about what we do with the roles and balancing some of that some of the nicer external work that I have and making sure [NAME] gets that and I take some of what [NAME] finds challenging on a day to day basis because otherwise she doesn't develop and I'll lose her but also I'll lose touch with what's happening at grassroots level within the department and the staff don't see me so I try to balance those" (Lee)*

Here balancing exploitation and exploration at the departmental level is presented as a key to staff development as well as ensuring the Head of Department remains close to the provision for which they are accountable.

4.5.2 Category 2: Having the arguments

This category explores a central tactic which is identified as vital to these managers ability to enact contextual ambidexterity in the future. Here, the potentially contentious nature of pursuing dual strategic imperatives is acknowledged and an open discourse amongst the Faculty Management Group (FMG) is identified as the channel within which the two paradigms should be integrated to inform the strategic decision-making process (see Figure 23).

Figure 23 - Category map: Having the arguments



The importance of having a forum for discussion and shared strategic decision making is outlined by one managers consideration that;

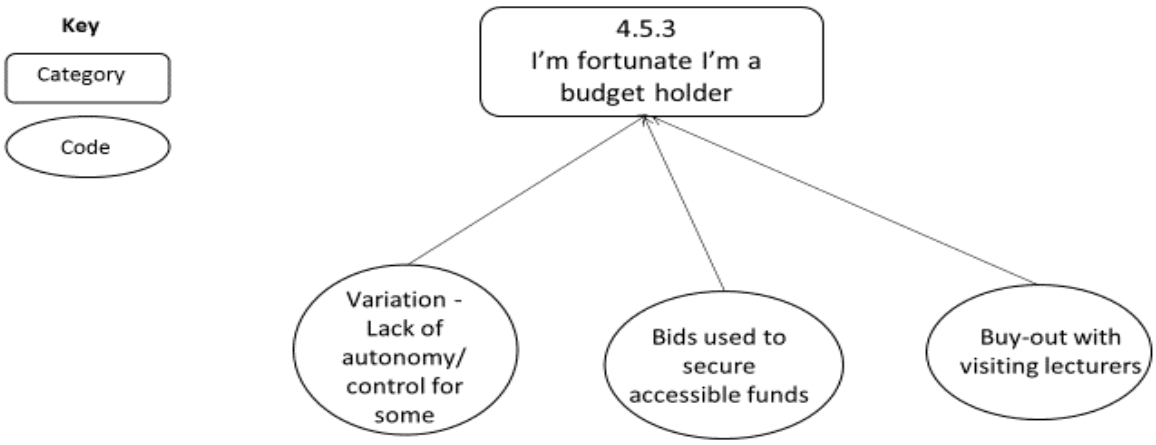
> *"there will always be tensions. So there's tensions between…you could go to two major extremes couldn't you, you could have everybody, all of your expertise focussed on your existing student body giving hopefully the best NSS in the world and making sure that core business was stable, but with the danger that you'd stand still and then you wouldn't get any future business, or you could put very little effort in to that core business, think it just ticks over and take on all the exciting new developments at the risk that then you lose all of that business because you drop in the league tables and your NSS because of your quality. So it's finding a way in the middle and I think there does have to be equal emphasis on both but I think that's where the tensions have to be argued, disagreed, discussed, but come to some agreement at…I think it is FMG because it's about…it's about a management decision isn't it?...it's being prepared to have the arguments" (Jo)*

Despite widespread accord with the views of the participant above the use of the auxiliary terms "*we should" (Max, Jo, Lee)* and "*we need to" (Lee),* in this area of the data suggests there is work still to do in this regard as articulated by Lee, "*I think it should be far more discursive*". Yet, the documentary data does indicate that the organisational case has made some progress in this respect, as evidenced by the predominant use of the verb "*reported*" within early records and "*discussed*" and "*considered*" prevailing in later counterparts (FMG and BEKT notes 2014-2018).

4.5.3 Category 3: I'm fortunate I'm a budget holder

As depicted in Figure 24, a small minority of participants in this case study identified financial autonomy as a facilitating factor in their ability to enact contextual ambidexterity, while others sought to secure accessible funds via bids. This lends support to the contention that a degree of decentralised financial control facilitates ambidextrous practice and the final code identifies the use of flexible staffing as a key facilitator of ambidexterity in this organisational context.

Figure 24 - Category map: I'm fortunate I'm a budget holder



Some participants expressed an awareness that the financial autonomy they had was atypical within this business-unit by opening their sentence with the phase *"I am fortunate" (Jane) "we're fortunate" (Charlie)*. The financial autonomy afforded to these individuals was utilised as a means of alleviating

the pervasive tensions by expanding their available resources using visiting lecturers, either to cover teaching or offer much needed expertise:

> *"We're fortunate in that we can…I can buy out… So, I need now somebody that understands the quite senior architecture of the NHS and social care in [Local area]. So now it suits me to employ or have a consultant, somebody like [Name] who's just retired from the Social Services. He knows the area inside out... So, for me he solves a problem" (Charlie)*

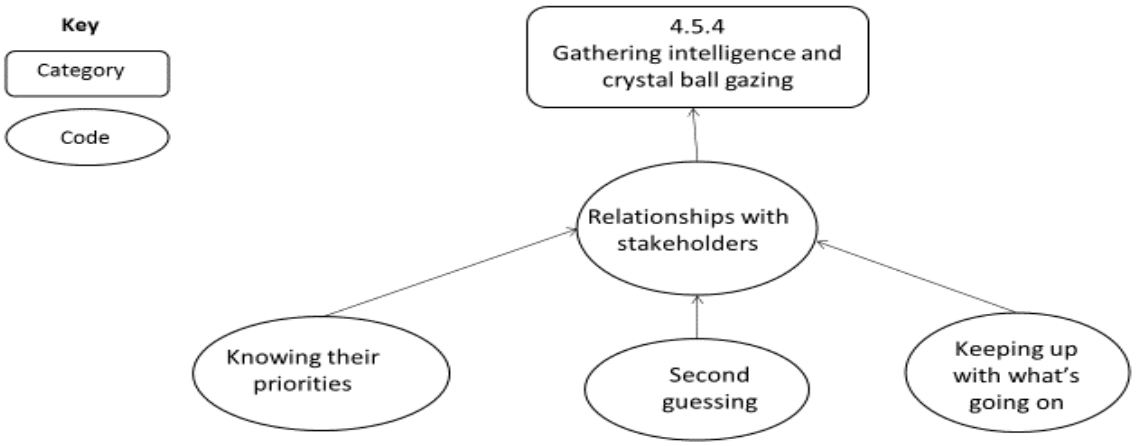
The importance of financial autonomy is also evident in the way in which the managers in this case discuss the use of internal bids as a mechanism via which they can acquire control of small amounts of money to support staff development within their departments. Alternatively, a highly creative approach is depicted by the following participants use of honorary contracts as a means of overcoming this perceived lack of financial autonomy:

> *Participant: "cause we didn't have all the expertise in house for one of those modules to be developed, so that took some risk and guts I think because we had to go out and about and obviously there was not a massive big funding envelope for visiting lecturers neither so that was being diminished at the same sort of time as we were just starting really."*
> *Interviewer: "Setting up, yeah"*
> *Participant: "So, it was around looking at… looking and talking about their revalidation, the doctors and CPD [Continuing Professional Development] and trying to convince if you like, or influence, them in a positive way to try and get them on board to signing up for an honorary contract which touch wood, they've done, and they've done it fabulously" (Jo)*

4.5.4 Category 4: Gathering intelligence and crystal ball gazing

This category emanates from the way in which the participants in this study use market intelligence gathered via relationships with stakeholders to inform their strategic direction of the case (see Figure 25).

Figure 25 - Category map: Gathering intelligence and crystal ball gazing



This is depicted as a combination of "*blue sky thinking*" *(Jo)* or "*crystal ball gazing" (Charlie, Linda)* and liaison with local stakeholders:

> *"so almost like the sort of the blue sky thinking, but then actually bring it all down to what we're actually gonna focus on. The other place that the intelligence needs to come from very much is the local workforce erm…action boards, education boards, where there's…they're looking at workforce development, new roles, what the priorities are for the STP [Strategic Transformation Plan], and that needs to feed in to our planning. So, directors of nursing meetings, they're the…not just the nursing leads but they're the…largely the nursing and allied professional leads in the trusts, they feed in to quarterly meetings, what are…what their priorities are and there is a lot of consistency from that," (Jo)*

One participant also identifies informal means by which this market intelligence can be gathered, indicating the potential utility of managers drawing on the staff in their team to gather intelligence:

> *"practically every day and when you listen, even informally in meetings, there's a sense of change, there's something happening. The language changes. The urgency with which they start talking about what their workforce needs alters and they start… it is listening to practitioners and I don't think that's necessarily a…it's not always a formal meeting I suppose. So as a Head it was a formal meeting cause you're engaging with Directors of Nursing and workforce and they'd be very clear on what they wanted but a lot of those ideas around what practitioners and the workforce wants came from actually listening to how practitioners were talking in the classroom. In formal meetings you have with your PEFs or practice partners and you actually get a sense there's something different going on here" (Linda)*

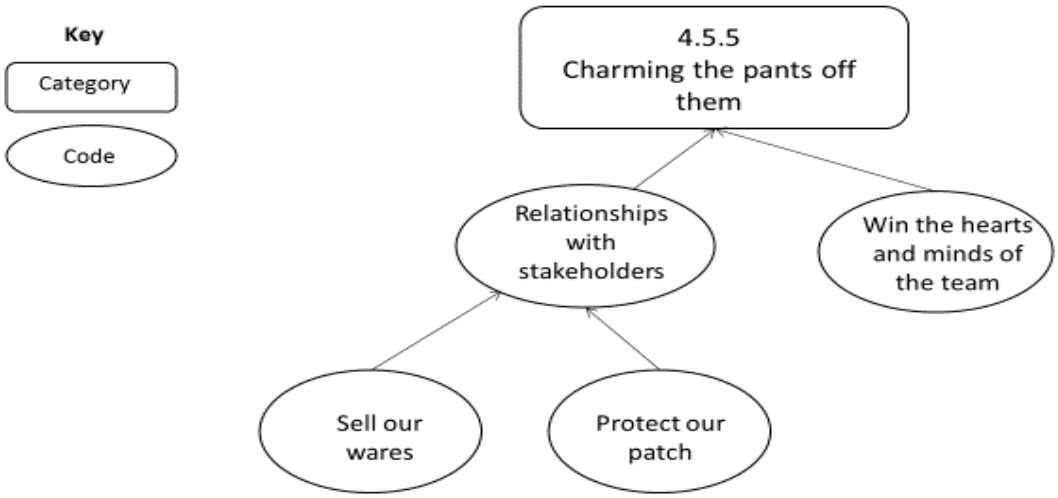
Past experiences are also depicted as an additional way in which managers can attempt to anticipate changes in the market:

"I would say we need to look at what happened last year and actually second-guess that the same amount might be a different subject and that might need to have a little bit of sort of jiggling in terms of who the best individual is, but I think we should be able to predict roughly what time is needed for that" (Jo)

4.5.5 Category 5: Charming the pants off them

The final category in this theme identifies social capital as a key enabler of ambidextrous practice as illustrated in Figure 26.

Figure 26 - Category map: Charming the pants off them



The tactics outlined within this category pre-dominate across the documentary and narrative data with a broad intent to "*Enhance engagement with all our stakeholders*" (CP: p. 8). This denotes an explicit strategic directive of the faculty in this case as evidenced in the following archival extract *"FMG are continuing to prioritise communication with Stakeholders, including NHS Trusts, CCGs [Clinical Commissioning Groups] and FE's [Further Education]" (FMG notes, 3.1.17).* This can be seen to be motivated by the perception of the placement circuit, provided by local health care organisations, as both an invaluable source of market intelligence (Category 4.6.4) and more importantly the frontline in these managers fight to protect their position in the market (Category 4.5.5). Despite the following

organisational Marketing Strategy approach "*We do not employ a sales-driven approach since this would not be appropriate to the nature of our business" (MS, Page 3),* the participants can be seen to endow consumer sovereignty upon local service providers. This manifests in the way in which participants discuss their relationships with these stakeholders in terms of needing to "*sell our wares*" *(Sam)* and *"trying to sell what we've got" (Alison).*

Here, the following participant draws a clear correlation between the viability of the faculty's core educational provision and the ability to secure placements from local stakeholders:

> *"as a Faculty to face the challenges shouldn't we work as closely as possible with our Trusts to ensure that they continue to support the students that then we place with them cause quite key in that we cannot obviously recruit students to which we've no placements for to put them" (Drew)*

Hence, a central ambidextrous tactic employed by the actors in this case study is to build and secure relationships with these parties. This process is described by Alex (participant) as *"I've tried to charm the pants of them".* Here, social capital is depicted as a central resource employed to:

1) support income generation initiatives (exploration):

> *"I would say that I do my best to maximise my social capital. I've got good connections which I continue to keep. So, I think if you can use the people that you've met along you, you know, your academic journey, people that you've worked with in the past, if you nurture those relationships that they're invaluable" (Charlie)*

2) Maintain and enhance current provision (exploitation):

> *"I think the things that facilitated me was that leadership experience in the past as being maximising and probably exploiting, if I'm really honest, my own relationships with them. I'm quite known round the circuit not for being a particularly wonderful academic but for being a manager in the NHS" (Alex)*

3) gain approval from the academic community which one manager outlines as *"trying to win the hearts and minds of the teams" (Alex).*

The importance this manager places on ensuring that strategic decisions finds acceptance within the academic community may be well advised given the following Key Performance Indicator:

> "*the extent to which the University environment is perceived as one within which shared values can be demonstrated*" *(PMDS, 2010-2015).*

This dependence upon local stakeholders can also be seen to generate a distortion in the conventional business model, in which products or services are delivered in exchange for remuneration. Respondents in this case outline the emergence of a strategy that sees the faculty provide cost-neutral services, or even incur a loss in the interest of securing and/or maintaining relationships with these powerful organisations:

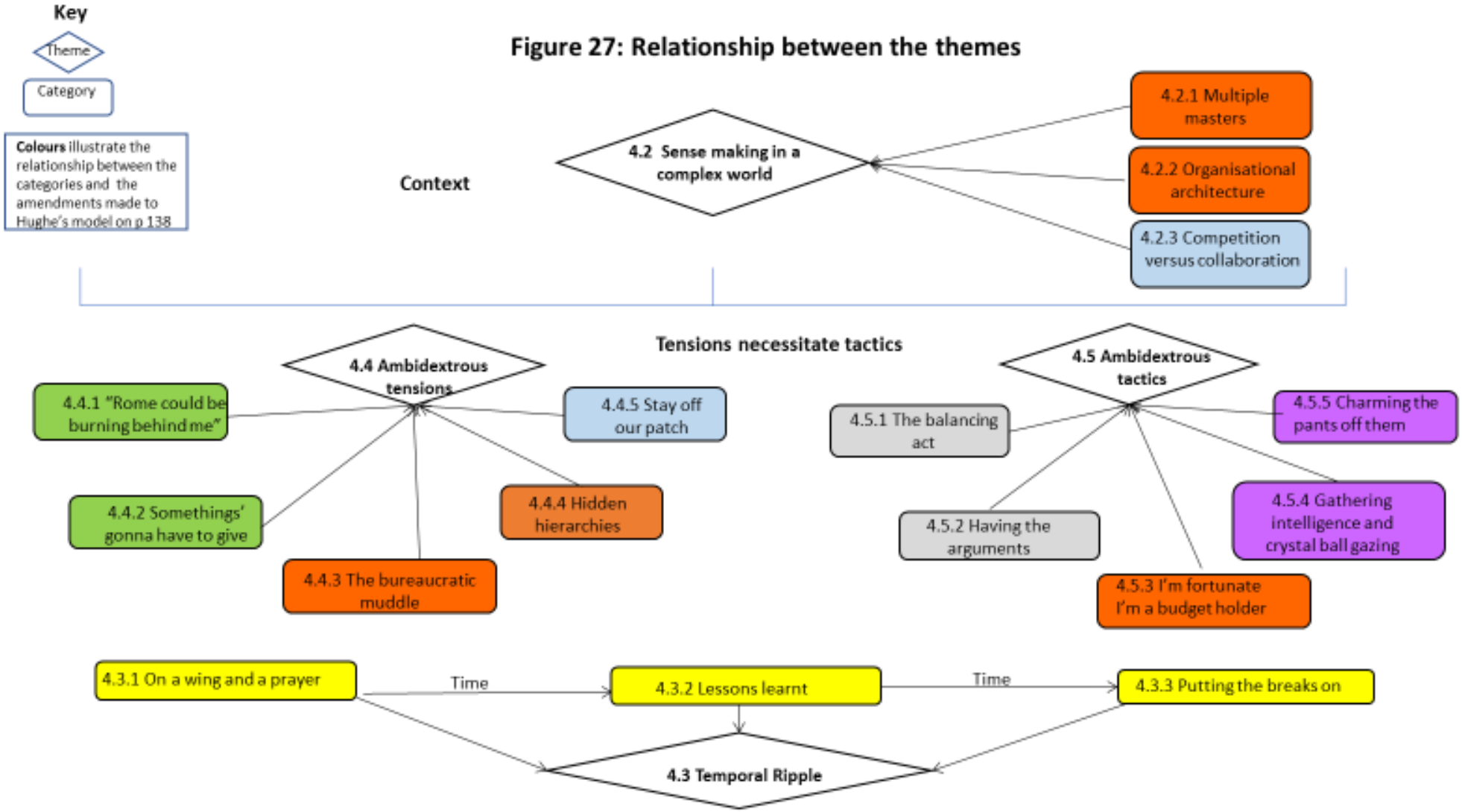
> *"sometimes we have to do things at post registration level, like these workshops, that will actually help us maintain the relationships and the goodwill of the people who are going to send us the students, who are going to be paying £9,250 a year. A recent example of that is a partnership agreement with local authorities. Now the partnership agreement, we have some partnerships that are very lucrative in terms of finance, this is one that isn't lucrative in terms of income but actually we want to…we're happy to keep that because that would maintain our relationships with local authorities which have a positive impact on student placements … that's an example of where it's not as simple as a pure business model where everything has to make a big profit" (Jo)*

4.5.6 Summary

This theme evidenced a collective consensus regarding the diverse range of interconnected strategies and tactics perceived as efficacious in this case study. Yet, the data indicates that many of these are yet to reach fruition, suggesting that this study takes places at a time of organisational evolution. The marketisation agenda can be seen to have inspired tactics aimed at gathering market intelligence and securing relationships with the customer base to assure the protection and growth of market share. Wider tactics seek to combine elements of structural and contextual ambidexterity across the business unit in this case, before making collective decisions which take account of explorative and exploitative aspects of practice.

4.6 Chapter summary

Figure 27 draws the findings together with Theme 1 evidencing the highly complex and changeable landscape within which academic managers of professional healthcare education engage. Totalitarian political changes are shown to be transforming and reshaping managerial roles, necessitating ambidextrous capabilities, competencies and tactics. Theme 2 offers an insight into the historical context of this case, depicting a time of exploration resulting in rapid growth and diversification both for the business unit and the wider organisation. The case study findings also indicate that the organisation has experienced a period of financial austerity. Together these factors can be seen to have contributed to the complexity experienced by these actors, inspiring valuable lessons both for individuals, the business-unit and the organisation in which it operates. The orthogonal positionality of exploration and exploitation is challenged by the data, with the two paradigms depicted along a continuum and a complex interdependency is also unearthed. Here contemporary managerial practice includes a focus on growth in response to the workforce needs of local stakeholders endowed with consumer sovereignty, drawing on existing capabilities but also demanding new ways of working and additional resources and, as such, is conceptualised as 'exploratory'. Furthermore, the findings tentatively indicate that the managerial team, in this case, is heterogeneous in terms of its members' psychological tendencies towards exploration and exploitation. Ambidexterity is depicted as both a vital capability and the cause of considerable tension, which owes much to the way that explorative and exploitative endeavours are seen to draw on shared resources arousing multifaceted tensions. In response, the managers in this case and the business unit can be seen to have begun to develop a diverse range of strategies and tactics aimed at overcoming these barriers, highlighting the importance of further evolutionary changes if the faculty is to prosper in the new world order.


Key
Theme
Category
Colours illustrate the relationship between the categories and the amendments made to Hughe's model on p 138
Figure 27: Relationship between the themes
Context
4.2 Sense making in a complex world
4.2.1 Multiple masters
4.2.2 Organisational architecture
4.2.3 Competition versus collaboration
Tensions necessitate tactics
4.4 Ambidextrous tensions
4.4.1 "Rome could be burning behind me"
4.4.2 Somethings' gonna have to give
4.4.3 The bureaucratic muddle
4.4.4 Hidden hierarchies
4.4.5 Stay off our patch
4.5 Ambidextrous tactics
4.5.1 The balancing act
4.5.2 Having the arguments
4.5.3 I'm fortunate I'm a budget holder
4.5.4 Gathering intelligence and crystal ball gazing
4.5.5 Charming the pants off them
4.3.1 On a wing and a prayer
Time
4.3.2 Lessons learnt
Time
4.3.3 Putting the breaks on
4.3 Temporal Ripple

5 Chapter 5 – Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws together the four themes presented in the findings and discusses them alongside the existing theoretical and empirical literature, identifying the distinctive contributions made by this research study. The chapter is structured to facilitate a critical discussion regarding the research question and each related sub question in turn.

5.2 Research question: How is ambidexterity experienced by managers of healthcare professional education?

The findings of this study echo the extant literature in that ambidexterity is shown to be a central facet of managerial practice. This offers verification to the nascent body of literature that advocates for the utility of this construct in the Higher Education sector (Stokes et al, 2016; Kobarg, Wollersheim, Welpe, & Spörrle, 2017; Chang et al, 2016; Tahar et al, 2011; Ambos et al, 2008; Chang, 2009; Yang et al, 2010). Indeed, a key finding confirms the existence of the various forms of ambidexterity within this organisational case. Chen (2017) proposes the term "dynamic ambidexterity" to denote the combination of structural ambidexterity at the corporate level, contextual ambidexterity at the business-unit level and temporal ambidexterity at the project level. While this study can be seen to reflect the consensus that organisational ambidexterity incorporates a combination of these various forms nested throughout the organisation (Turner & Lee-Kelly, 2012; Turner et al. 2013; Chen, 2017), the way in which each typology manifests is atypical of that proposed in the wider organisational literature, adding to and challenging our current understanding of ambidexterity in this organisational context.

Temporal ambidexterity is commonly depicted as the way in which organisations sequentially oscillate between periods of exploration and exploitation, reconfiguring their strategies and structures accordingly (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2013). Although widely considered to be effective at the project level (Chen, 2017) this approach is commonly heralded as most suited to stable slow-moving market environments (O'Rielly & Tushman, 2013). Thus, temporal approaches may not be the most appropriate means of pursing ambidexterity for those competing in the turbulent waters of the contemporary educational arena.

Throughout the period under investigation, the faculty at the centre of this case, and the university in which it is situated, are operating at a time of considerable change and uncertainty driven by the marketisation of the academy and, more recently, healthcare education. Market deregulation and the introduction of structural frameworks aimed at facilitating market entry are established indicators of hypercompetition (Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Schofield, Cotton, Gresty, Kneale, & Winter, 2013) and therefore this organisation can be seen to be engaged in the market during a period when the competitive priority is escalating to become increasingly hypercompetitive. However, despite Kritz et al's (2014) finding that in hypercompetitive markets any competitive advantage gained via ambidexterity may be fleeting, the wider literature suggests that these market conditions heighten the importance of ambidextrous capabilities (O'Rielly & Tushman, 2013; Geerts et al, 2010).

In this case the findings do evidence a temporality at the heart of professional healthcare managers' experiences of ambidexterity (see Temporal ripples: p. 82), yet the way in which it emerges differs significantly from the conceptualisation of temporal ambidexterity offered by early scholars. This study investigated the development of the case over a four-year period during which time it adopted consistent, explicit, strategic aims reflective of dual ambidextrous imperatives (see Strategic aims of the case: p. 71). The organisational structure also remained stable over this same period. However, the actors in this case portray their experience as one in which there has been a significant temporal shift in the organisational culture and the implicit priority given to exploration and exploitation,

indicating that a more idiosyncratic form of temporal ambidexterity may be being enacted in this context. Here the work of Wei et al (2014) provides some illumination: they adopt an attention-based view of ambidexterity and propose that temporal changes related to market orientation may offer an alternative lens through which to investigate ambidexterity.

Organisations with a proactive market orientation seek to discover new opportunities to meet the future needs of customers, while those with a responsive market orientation draw on intelligence to target current customers (Jaworski, Kohli, & Sahay, 2000). This accurately portrays the changes evidenced here, as the business unit is shown to have a recent history of adopting an explorative priority with a proactive market orientation, focused on diversification and developing third-stream income. Heightened competition in the market then motivated a temporal shift towards exploitation. This indicates that the financial stability, afforded by the previous funding policy of regional commissioning for nurse education, provided the business unit with a stable base from which to explore and facilitated a degree of risk taking. In the absence of this stability, the faculty focused on exploitation with the aim of defending and protecting the current market position. Yet, an exploitative priority necessitates a responsive market orientation, in which the interests of current stakeholders take precedence, and thus the faculty continued to engage in exploration by developing new business in response to requests from local healthcare employers. Thus, the priority to maintain effective relationships with existing stakeholders is dependent, in part, upon a willingness to engage in exploration, albeit with a responsive market orientation. In effect, this limits the business-unit's autonomy, yet it also alludes to the potential to derive exploitative gains from explorative endeavours and vice versa which supports Andriopolous and Lewis's (2010) view that the two paradigms have the potential to fuel as well as frustrate each other.

Broadening the empirical gaze to consider the wider organisational context also evidences that, over the same period, the university was investing significantly in large scale exploratory ventures, which may have limited the available resources and impeded ambidexterity lower down the organisational

structure. This raises interesting questions regarding the interface between ambidexterity at the macro (organisational) level and micro (business unit or individual) level which are not addressed by the extant literature, where the predominant focus is on either interorganisational/ organisational ambidexterity, or more recently contextual, individual ambidexterity. Stokes et al (2015) make the point that "the turn toward the micro goes hand-in-hand with a turn away from the macro" (p. 70), lending support to calls for multi-domain, intra-organisational studies to advance our understanding of ambidexterity at the various organisational levels.

An alternative typology of ambidexterity focuses on the organisations' architectural design and O'Reilly and Tushman (2008) define this structural ambidexterity as "not only structurally separate units for exploration and exploitation but also different competencies, systems, incentives, processes and cultures" (p. 192). Although a degree of structural separation was in evidence within this business-unit it was limited to the role differentiation of senior managers who adopted integrative strategies reflective of those advocated by Jansen et al (2009) and Turner et al (2016). Moreover, wider university structures can be seen to have a predominant focus on exploitative areas of the business with a small number of discrete departments focused on exploration e.g. Knowledge Transfer office, Partnership Office.

Given that the focus of this study was on a single business-unit, and the managers therein, it is little surprise that it was contextual ambidexterity that manifested as the dominant mode of operation in this case. Gibson and Birkinshaw's (2004) interpretation of this as a multidimensional construct, which involves individuals moving between explorative and exploitative modes of operation, has found wide spread acceptance in the literature. This accurately depicts the way contextual ambidexterity is exhibited in this case which will be discussed further in consideration of the sub-research questions.

5.1 Sub-research question 1: How are exploitation and exploration experienced, at management level, in professional health education?

The findings from this study provide a valuable insight into academic managers experiences of exploration and exploitation in this case and challenges the orthogonal conceptualisation of exploration and exploitation.

Here exploitation is portrayed as the principal mode of operation, involving strategies and actions aimed at maintaining and enhancing the quality of existing educational programmes, projects and provision. This is reflective of Nieto-Rodriguez's (2014) assertion that exploitation is concerned with "Running-the-Business" (p. 36). This mode of operation is widely considered to include such things as "refinement, choice, production, efficiency, selection, implementation, execution" (March, 1991: p. 71). Here, exploration is predominantly depicted as the riskier area of engagement, involving the development of new educational programmes, collaborative partnerships and the generation of third-stream income from bids and projects. Again, this finds wide accord with the literature, with March's (1991) suggestion that exploration involves "variation, risk taking, experimentation, play, flexibility, discovery, innovation" (p. 71). Nieto-Rodriguez (2014) draw these actions together to describe exploration as "Changing-the-Business" (p. 36). A future orientation and emphasis on change was evident in the explorative logic in this case; however, it is worth noting that here the focus is on incremental growth with new business adding to, rather than superseding, that which is already in existence.

The current literature on ambidextrous practice provides little insight into the lived reality of individuals balancing this duality and the findings from this case accordingly make a valuable contribution in this regard. Whilst the faculty structure calls on a minority of managers to engage in one or other of the two logics, it is predominantly the Heads of Department who are called upon to enact contextual ambidexterity. Several scholars have considered how this might best be achieved, however, very few have explored the affective domain to reveal individuals' psychological responses

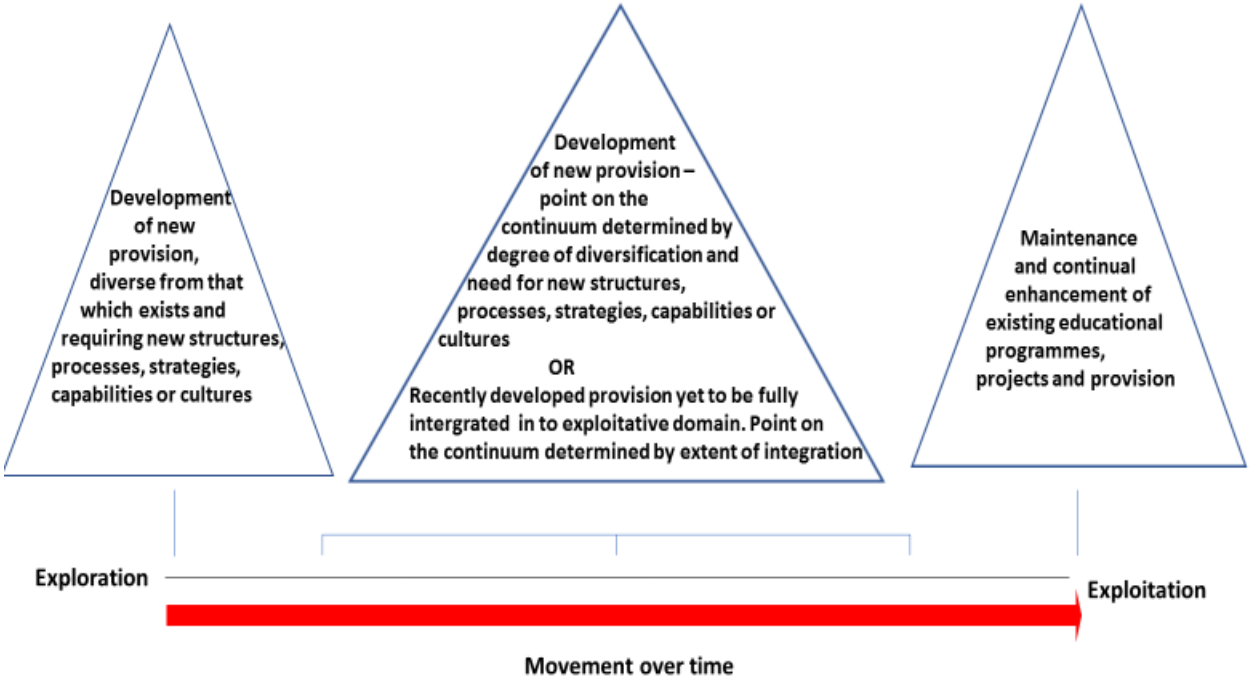
to the different logics. Interestingly, it is Stokes et al's (2015) study into contextual ambidexterity with which clear parallels emerge here. Akin to the findings of this study, they identify significant variation in the extent to which the managers embrace and welcome the explorative element of their role, with some seen to "discover a heightened value in developing explorative stances and constructed new and emerging professional identities in the emergent environment" (Stokes et al, 2015: p. 11). In addition, others expressed a degree of discomfort with the emerging business model, supporting Pucciarelli and Kaplan's (2016) claim that academics are unlikely to embrace a market ethos which is at odds with the traditional values central to the academic identity. This is also complemented by Philpott, Dooley, O'Reilly and Lupton's (2011) offering, which identifies significant variation in the psychological tendency towards entrepreneurialism amongst university professors. Moreover, Rolfe (2012), a prominent nursing theorist, presents a compelling argument that the values of nursing and nurse education, enshrined in the code of conduct requisite "to do good" are incongruent with those of the market-orientated Higher Education arena. Rolfe (2012) argues that the focus on outcomes such as student satisfaction, classifications, continuation and grant capture detract from the primary purpose of nurse education and research which is to have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of service users. As such he advocates for values-based scholarship in which the academic community develop curricular and research studies based on the potential to enhance care delivery rather than generate income or academic esteem. Competition, a central tenant of the market economy culture, is also depicted as oppositional to the co-operative and collaborative spirit of the profession leading Rolfe to call on the academic community to assert the traditional values of the profession for the betterment of nursing rather than organisational profit margins. Given that the actors in this case have an additional academic identity, which is also widely problematised within the literature (Ylijoki & Ursin, 2013; Winter & O'Donohue, 2012; Taberner, 2018) perhaps it should be of little surprise that some acquiesce. This was expressed by one participant as "making money is not what makes me tick" (see Hidden hierarchies: p. 97).

The shortcomings and merits of managerial team heterogeneity/homogeneity remains an area of contention in the extant literature, which focuses primarily on diversity in terms of functional and personality traits rather than psychological preference, rendering it difficult to determine the significance of the variation found in this case. Interestingly, Stokes et al's (2005) research also considered quasi-public sector organisations, which identifies a need for further research to explore whether the diverse psychological responses evident in these findings are a feature of those employed in this sector of industry and a facet of the cultural evolutionary process for organisations engaged in the move to an increasingly corporate business model.

The findings from this study run counter to the views of Jansen et al (2009), He and Wong (2004) and Chen (2017) who contend that substantially different structures, processes, strategies, capabilities and cultures are required for the two logics. Here, this study offers a unique contribution rejecting the orthogonal conceptualisation in favour of the view of exploitation and exploration existing along a continuum. This is evident, in the way in which the data indicate that in the experience of the managers in this case, explorative and exploitative endeavours commonly draw on shared existing capabilities, with the degree to which they represent and demand new capabilities determining how explorative they are perceived to be (see Figure 28: p .119). Participants in this study depict a historical focus on diversification, derived from a proactive market orientation, as much more explorative than current areas of growth. Contemporary practice is portrayed as aligning with a responsive market orientation, aimed at meeting the workforce development needs of local stakeholders and this has more in common with the existing portfolio offered by the faculty. Although some might argue that this recent activity is exploitative the narrative of the actors in this case indicates that they continue to conceptualise it as exploration but to a lesser extent than earlier activities. Indeed, Gupta et al (2006) point out that "what one individual or organisation may view as exploratory and experimental learning, another team may view as exploitative and incremental learning" (p. 695). Their detailed debate regarding continuity verses orthogonality concludes that a universal argument cannot be made in favour of either.

The findings of this study indicate that the dual concepts of exploration and exploitation, originally defined to reflect the logics of manufacturing and product design industries, undergo a degree of distortion when applied to Higher Education. Once again this finds congruence with the work of Philpott et al (2011) who propose a model which situates various forms of university entrepreneurial activity along a spectrum that spans the traditional and entrepreneurial paradigms. Thus, as this organisation and business-unit develops its structures, processes, strategies, capabilities and cultures, explorative developments should move along the trajectory to become part of the exploitative paradigm. Furthermore, new business which would once have been perceived as highly explorative, should become less so in subsequent years. The extent to which this is evident in this case will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Figure 28: **Managers experience of the exploitation-exploitation continuum in professional healthcare education**



5.2 Sub-research question 2: What tensions arise in the pursuit of ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?

Analysis of the findings from this case study unearths an abundance of tensions arising from the pursuit of contextual ambidexterity. Theoretical assertions that this would be the case have been borne out via empirical studies and stand testament to the challenges faced by those striving to achieve ambidexterity in a diverse range of industries (Zimmermann et al, 2017; Bergman, 2012; Stokes et al, 2015; Gupta et al, 2006; Raisch et al, 2009; Wei et al, 2014). This research draws parallels with many of the tensions identified in the existing body of work, in this field, as well as advancing our understanding of ambidexterity by identifying some which are contextually distinct. This includes new evidence of three context-specific ambidextrous tensions. Firstly, the inherent inflexibility of the educational market place is shown to have the potential to impede temporal ambidexterity. Secondly, the marketisation of healthcare education redefines the relationships with other educational providers who are portrayed as both collaborators and competitors. Thirdly, relationships with key stakeholders are also altered as the marketplace positions educational organisations as providers and bequeaths consumer sovereignty upon personnel employed in healthcare provider organisations.

Before considering the context-specific tensions attention will be afforded to the way in which well documented ambidextrous tensions emerge in this organisational context. In keeping with the wider literature, a scarcity of resources is identified as a pervasive cause of ambidextrous tensions in this case. Exploration involves speculative investment in the hope of future returns, and it is widely acknowledged that in many organisations it will draw from the same finite pot as exploitation (March, 1991; Gupta et al, 2006). Thus, resource allocation mechanisms, which align staffing levels with current commitments, fail to create leeway for exploration and exacerbate the ambidextrous tensions in this case. The findings also illustrate how exploration impacts on exploitation in this organisational context. The most significant resource in this educational organisation is staff time and these managers clearly articulate the challenges they face in balancing their own time across explorative

and exploitative boundaries. This is not without its problems, with time spend on exploration depicted as incurring a cost in terms of the managers awareness of the exploitative domain described by one participant as “Rome could be burning behind me” (see p. 9). Further the categories entitled “Somethings gonna have to give” (see p. 91) and “hidden hierarchies” (see p. 96) illustrate that the managers galvanise their resources to meet these dual demands simultaneously, often by redirecting skilled staff onto explorative projects which has the potential have a deleterious effect on their exploitative responsibilities. The findings indicate that prioritisation and delegation are the dominant strategies these managers employ as a means of balancing their own time, turning their attention to whichever activity is of the greatest import whilst delegating less vital activities to their Deputy Head and programme leaders (see The balancing act: p 101) and where the resource is allowed they use temporary staff to expand their existing resource base (see I’m fortunate I’m a budget holder: p 104).

The tension caused by economic austerity is described as pervasive insofar as it can be seen to inspire several others, mirroring Zimmerman et al’s (2017) finding that, at the individual level contextual ambidextrous tensions are multidimensional and interrelated. A dominant strategy employed, in this case, sees managers redirect highly skilled staff towards exploration and away from exploitative activities. This represents a key mechanism by which exploration can impact on exploitation in the educational arena which, in turn, causes tensions across the managerial team. This form of “explorative pull” (Stokes et al, 2017) is exacerbated by the matrix management system employed in this faculty as the manager with the potential to derive explorative gains is not necessarily the same individual responsible for the exploitative area of provision affected (see Organisational architecture: p. 77).

The findings also indicate that managers tasked with enacting contextual ambidexterity engage in a form of sense-making (Weick, 1995) in a process of constant re-evaluation regarding the amount of energy and resource they can afford to allocate to exploration without posing a risk to their existing exploitative portfolio. National quality metrics such as the TEF, NSS and REF feature in the narrative

here, with Heads of Department identifying the potential of a drop-in table position as an explicit danger of over-emphasising exploration. While some explorative enterprises fail to gain traction, others, such as bids and projects, come with financial remuneration and programmes which make a successfully entry into the market will generate income, in time. This ought to lead to an increase in the available resources and ease the tensions identified above. However, in this case, the combined impact of austerity and systematic barriers (see Somethings' gonna have to give: p. 91 and The bureaucratic muddle: p. 93) are seen to present significant hurdles in this regard.

Tensions between university regulations, systems and processes and external regulatory bodies also permeate this case data corpus. Burgess, Strauss, Currie and Wood (2015) use the term "hybrid middle managers" to describe those who are at once managers and healthcare professionals, and identify ambidextrous tensions arising from the regulatory context within which they practice. Moreover, managing the exploitative domain, in relation to healthcare professional programmes, is identified as particularly challenging. This is based on the contention that University systems and process are designed to facilitate an undergraduate framework that does not meet the regulatory requirements of this complex area of provision (see Multiple masters: p. 75). This indicates that educational organisations wishing to embrace the Government's Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future (HM Government, 2017) have some way to go in the development of organisational systems and processes that will accord with this emerging agenda.

As identified earlier, the data includes evidence of three highly idiosyncratic and context-specific ambidextrous tensions the first of which emerges from the theme entitled "The temporal ripple". Perhaps unsurprisingly, the findings of this study accord with the widely held perception of educational establishments as highly bureaucratic (Stokes et al, 2017; Pucciarelli & Kaplan, 2016; Carter, 2013; Birds, 2014). However, one of the consequences of the inflexibility of this business model is, to date, undocumented. An explorative focus on diversification is experienced by these managers to have had an enduring impact on exploitation in the faculty by exacerbating the complexity of their

work and impacting on their efficiency. This persists despite a shift in focus towards the less explorative end of the spectrum, indicating that organisational inflexibility does not only impact on the speed at which educational establishments grow, but also on the rate at which they can contract should market conditions change. If we consider the commodity on offer to be programmes of education, projects and collaborative partnerships, then this becomes clearer. Contractual obligations dictate the length of commitment required for projects and collaborative partnerships and Higher Education programmes commonly take between two and seven years to complete dependent on the mode of study. As such, educational managers seeking to grow their business should be cognisant of the inherent inflexibility of this marketplace which hinders the ability to swiftly flux and change from exploration to exploitation and extends the potential legacy left by explorative endeavours.

The remaining two context-specific tensions to emerge in this dataset share a focus on the way in which marketisation is enthusing changes in the relationships between the various actors. Nedbalová, Greenacre and Schulz (2014) offer a critical debate regarding the influence of market forces in the UK Higher Education sector and identify significant distortions to the business model, which they argue are exacerbated in highly regulated fields such as healthcare. This is lent weight by the findings in this case, drawing together the categories of “competition versus collaboration” (p. 79), “stay off our patch” (p. 98) and “charming the pants off them” (p. 107), to present unique evidence that the relationships between various stakeholders become distorted by market conditions engendering tensions in the academy.

The first of these, competition versus collaboration, focuses on the relationship between these academic healthcare managers and their counterparts in other local HEI’s. This study offers an original contribution by identifying that organisations which the conventional business ethos would label competitors, are perceived as both competitors and collaborators simultaneously. On the surface this could be merely taken as a remnant of the former system in which these regional partners worked together, under the auspice of Health Education North, however detailed analysis of the data suggests

broader cultural and contextual forces may also be at play. To meet the NMC diktat that student nurses spend a minimum of 2,300 hours in clinical practice during their programme, educational providers must develop extensive placement networks. In turn, healthcare providers seek to develop relationships with the students placed with them as a key recruitment strategy. Thus, competition between geographically close HEI's seeking access to the same placement circuit is fierce, despite a temporary agreement to continue to utilise placements as per the arrangements under the previous model of commissioned education. Conversely, the systems and processes needed to ensure the placements accord with the NMC regulatory framework are resource-intensive and healthcare providers desire a degree of uniformity between the educational providers with whom they engage; therefore, a collaborative approach between the same local HEI's is mutually beneficial. Thus, the current dynamic dictates that these managers carefully balance a collaborative and competitive stance with other local HEI's while also enhancing relationships with local provider organisations. A notable feature of the data here also indicates that private for-profit organisations or those from outside the region are classified solely as competitors.

This complex contextual picture also has a powerful influence on managers' relationships with local healthcare providers inspiring a further context specific tension thus: the rationale for the removal of regional commissioning for nurse education was presented primarily as a way in which to attract more people into the profession on the basis that this would effectively lift the cap on the number of places the Government could afford. While early indicators evidence a drop-in applications (Mitchell, 2018) it has also become clear that maintaining current student numbers, or increasing them, is dependent on access to placements, motivating an unexpected and, as yet, undocumented consequence of this multifaceted marketplace which emerges in the findings of this study. Barnett's (2000) hypothetical suggestion that a quasi-market could arise between employers and educational providers is seen here, where the factors discussed above see local healthcare organisations endowed with a form of consumer sovereignty which has a significant impact on the ambidextrous practices of this business unit. The marketisation agenda compelled the faculty to shift its focus to exploitation, yet the

precedence placed on maintaining effective relationships with local healthcare provider organisations, to protect exploitative activities, necessitates a responsive market orientation and this, in turn, influences the ambidextrous decision-making process. This compels the faculty to engage in exploration to address the needs of local healthcare providers even when this is not an otherwise attractive option.

Interestingly, the predominant focus on the consumerisation of the student, so prevalent in the Higher Education literature, did not explicitly feature in the findings. However, it could be interpreted as implicit in the managers discussion regarding the importance of audit data and was raised when the participants were asked to confirm the credibility of the findings. This suggests that whilst securing access to placements had been the priority in the immediate period after the funding reforms were announced, challenges regarding the recruitment of students may have led to a heightened awareness of the importance of effective marketing and the emerging conceptualisation of the student as a consumer.

This case study has evidenced the complex nature of the educational landscape in professional healthcare which creates numerous multifaceted and interrelated tensions in the evolution toward an ambidextrous future necessitating further exploration of the strategies that facilitate and obstruct its development.

5.3 Sub–research question 3: What are the enablers and barriers to ambidexterity for mangers of health professional education?

The findings from this case study support the dominant perception of the educational sector as highly inflexible and bureaucratic. They offer a novel insight into the way in which the complex ambidextrous tensions, experienced by managers of professional healthcare education, inspire creative solutions aimed at optimising those factors that enable ambidexterity and overcome those which mitigate against the same. Thus, the following discussion will consider the findings in relation to the wider ambidexterity literature, offering an exploration of the barriers and enablers in this specific context and cast light on the tactics employed to navigate the many challenges.

The literature, which explores the antecedents of ambidexterity, concurs that organisational culture is of crucial importance, although some discord persists about which specific factors prove most beneficial. Gibson and Birkinshaw (2004) make a valuable contribution, identifying a need for an organisational context characterised by a balance between both discipline and stretch, and support and trust. This draws together the key features of both a knowledge sharing culture, as advocated by Lin and McDonough (2011), and an empowering culture which was found to be more effective in the work of Caniëls et al (2017). In summary, the existing body of empirical evidence can be seen to signify the importance of a culture in which those required to foster ambidextrous practices are afforded the autonomy to do so (empowering culture) in an open and supportive context (knowledge-sharing culture). The findings from this case indicate that the managers past experiences of struggling to balance the exploitative and explorative demands of their role has heightened their awareness of a need for both knowledge sharing and empowering cultural facets. Yet the findings here present a lack of autonomy and discretionary slack as a central obstacle in addressing the key ambidextrous challenge of "reallocating assets and capabilities to address new threats and opportunities" (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2011: p. 17), which Boukamel and Emery (2017) identify as an obstacle to the development of organisational ambidexterity across the public sector.

Numerous university systems and processes also attract derision in this regard. This is evident in the categories entitled Organisational Architecture (p. 77), Hidden hierarchies (p. 96) and the bureaucratic muddle (p.93). The data indicates that the organisational structure impedes managerial practice as each manager is responsible for a diverse range of provision and staff spread over geographically separate campuses. In addition, academic responsibilities are not contained at department level and the largest programme sits outside of the departmental structure. This heightens the tensions across the managerial team as an explorative decision made by one manager may impact on the exploitative responsibilities of another. The university system is also shown to hinder ambidexterity with the recruitment process depicted as overly bureaucratic, centrally controlled and slow to react, thereby obstructing a speedy response to any change in demand and diminishing the level of influence these managers have over this element of the business. Secondly, the lack of predictive capability of the academic workload management system is portrayed as impeding transparency regarding the academic capacity, thus hampering resource management. Related to this point Human Resource Management policies are also perceived to be ineffectual particularly in relation to capability management, mirroring the findings of Hancock and Hellawell (2016). The findings also demonstrate some deficits in organisational data management processes with managers conveying a mistrust in some of the available data together with challenges in accessing data of relevance to their exploitative activities. Thirdly, a lack of financial autonomy is identified as a central challenge for some of the managers in this case, engendering creative enabling tactics such as applying for small internal bids to provide access to funds within their control (see I'm fortunate I'm a budget holder: p. 104). Moreover, this includes the development of a flexible pool of staff, incorporating visiting lecturers and honorary professors, to provide a flexible workforce able to expand and contract in response to changing demands. Diversification of the funding base is portrayed as a central step in the transformation towards entrepreneurship in universities (Clark, 2001; Etzkowitz, 2016), while the necessity for flexible staffing models in financially constrained market-orientated Higher Education environments is reinforced in the work of Whitchurch and Gordon (2013). In this case study there is an element of

variation in the degree of budgetary control each manager has; however, even those managers with access to funds depict the financial management system as a highly inflexible means of dealing with diverse income streams from third-stream endeavours and iterative projects. This is ascribed to the legacy of its original purpose, which was concerned with monitoring the spend for research projects. Consequently, these actors engage in what Turner et al (2016) denote “gap filling”, a managerial act in which the project managers in their study “deliberately overcame deficiencies by performing tasks that he or she knew were necessary but were not, for various reasons, being performed” (p. 212). Here the mechanistic barriers outlined above hinder the ability of managers to mobilise resources between explorative and exploitative activities, in a timely fashion. As a consequence, managers have to fill the gaps which, in turn, exacerbates the challenge of balancing the duality of their role.

These structural and mechanistic factors are further exacerbated by cultural elements of the organisation explored in the category entitled Hidden hierarchies (see p. 96). Here the managerial team is shown to be diverse regarding their psychological preference for exploration and exploitation and there is a degree of confusion about what value is placed on exploration and exploitation level at the different levels of the organisation. Thus, in the experience of these managers, their attempts to enact contextual ambidexterity are significantly restricted by the organisational architecture, culture and university systems aligned to an exploitative logic, supporting the argument that public sector organisational structures are unfavourable for exploration (Cannaerts, Segers & Hendrickx, 2016). This restricts managers’ ability to embed explorative developments into the exploitative domain, in this case, and echoes the literature which explores entrepreneurship where those tasked with leading innovative projects find themselves mired in university bureaucracy and hindered by inflexible systems (Birds, 2014).

During the credibility check (six months after the initial data was collected) participants identified that some internal systems, including the workload management and finance management systems, were being updated to address some of the concerns they had mentioned. This suggests that the wider

organisation is gradually evolving in response to the changes in this sector. However, the lack of autonomy experienced by the actors in this case contrasts starkly with the recommendations advanced within the literature, where a devolution of power and control is posited as vital for the development of ambidexterity (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1996; Lin & McDonough, 2011; Zimmermann et al, 2018; Caniëls et al, 2017; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004). There is little evidence to suggest that such organisational transformation has taken place in Higher Education although Cranfield and Taylor's (2008) study identified significant variation in the distribution of organisational power across the sector. This is further complicated by Cranfield and Taylor's (2008) assertion that in cases where power and autonomy had been redistributed, away from the centre to the lower levels of organisational management, this proved to have a deleterious impact on the ability of the organisation to drive change across the institution. This indicates that the development of an empowering culture may prove difficult in an educational context and merits further empirical investigation.

Concomitant with this, there is a plethora of evidence to attest to the reformation of the academic identity which portrays managerialism, inspired by the neoliberal ethos of the marketisation agenda, to have a disempowering effect on the academic heartland thus inspiring tensions between the academic community and managerial personnel (Jamieson, 2012; Winter, 2009; Whitchurch, 2010; Kok, Douglas, McClelland, & Bryde, 2010). As alluded to earlier, the findings in this case do little to suggest that the organisation under investigation has undergone a process of power redistribution which may go some way to explaining why these tensions between the academic managers and those they manage did not emerge from this dataset. Thus, while the organisational culture of this business unit fails to grant these managers with the level of autonomy advocated in the literature and presents powerful barriers in their ability to enact contextual ambidexterity, it may also be affording them some protection from the turbulent relationships with their academic colleagues that are in evidence elsewhere in the academy.

There is widespread consensus that a culture of trust is of vital importance for the development of ambidexterity (Caniëls et al, 2017; Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004; Lin & McDonough, 2011; Purvee & Enkhtuvshin, 2015) and a crucial component of effective academic leadership (Hancock & Hellawell 2016; Bolden et al, 2012; Bryman, 2008, 2009). Thus, Hancock and Hellawell's (2016) assertion that organisational structures that position departmental heads in competition for resources pose a threat to trust across the managerial team. This is of specific relevance to this case, which adopts a matrix management system, widely problematised in the findings both in terms of the way it effectively pools staffing resources and blurs the lines of responsibility and accountability (see Organisational architecture: p. 77). This presents the potential to erode trust across the managerial team and supports Jamieson's (2012) contention that open debate and discussion is a central mechanism by which this can be avoided (see Having the arguments: p. 103). The managerial team here recognise a need for an open discursive forum in which they can discuss, integrate and debate the exploitative and explorative elements of their work and collaborate over shared decisions, referred to as "strategic debate" (Burgelman, 2002). This is considered an essential mechanism for resolving tensions and is a key enabler of ambidexterity (O'Reilly & Tushman, 2008, 2011) as it facilitates the managerial action of integration by bringing together exploration and exploitation to form a cohesive whole (Turner et al, 2016). Thus, these findings indicate that this capability is currently in development, once again suggesting that the business unit under investigation is currently engaged in a process of gradual transformation to align internal practices with the evolving demands of this dynamic educational landscape.

A rather ubiquitous barrier to the development of contextual ambidexterity surfaces from these findings, with several managers decrying their lack of "business acumen". The wider organisational management literature makes no reference to this phenomenon, and Stokes et al (2015) are alone in offering corroboration from their study, which also investigated the quasi-public sector. This infers that there may be much to be gained by attending to this unmet educational need across these organisational sectors. Yet the findings also identify that significant experiential learning has taken

place suggesting that ambidextrous capabilities may be learnt. Indeed, the literature does promote a tolerance of risk and failure as essential for exploration (Turner et al, 2012; Brion, Mothe, & Sabatier, 2010) and some commentators advocate the use of incentives (Kaplan & Henderson, 2005; Tuner et al, 2012). These potential enablers of ambidexterity are not explicitly employed in this case; however, the managerial personnel do demonstrate an acute awareness of the expectations placed upon them and of hidden hierarchies in relation to the value placed on various components of their work at different levels of the organisation (see Hidden hierarchies p. 96). Here, the positive regard of the wider team is portrayed as a powerful motivator while a lack of investment in exploration and the potential impact on exploitation acts as a stronger deterrent to future exploration.

As alluded to earlier, the contemporary Higher Education landscape is influenced by powerful national drivers aimed at compelling the academic community to increase their collaborative engagement with the industrial sector. The vocational emphasis of healthcare education means that the importance of this aspect of the managerial role cannot be over-emphasised in this case. Indeed, this is evident in the findings with social capital portrayed as a key enabler of ambidexterity throughout the managerial team. The value of the inter-woven facets of human, intellectual, social and organisational capital for is well-documented (Fu et al, 2016; Kostopoulos, Bozionelos, & Syrigos, 2015; Lazzarotti et al, 2017; Turner & Lee-Kelley, 2012; Chen, Zhang, Grover & Xiang, 2018; Turner et al, 2012; Kang and Snell, 2009) with evidence that these forms of capital facilitate contextual ambidexterity across the explorative/exploitative continuum.

In this case study the findings identify social capital as particularly important with the development of effective relationships with stakeholders as a central means of deriving ambidextrous benefit. Here, social capital is exercised to establish enduring bonds with the clinical community and these managers enlist several tactics to this end. Managers draw on well-established links with individuals with whom they have had a previous collegial relationship, and/or actively seek to develop them by capitalising on their shared professional expertise. They also draw on a combination of human and social capital

to develop an understanding of the professional agenda for this customer-base. This supports exploitation by facilitating continued access to experiential learning for students and enabling existing programmes to be refined and enhanced in line with service needs. In addition, exploration is enhanced as these networks act as a vital method of gathering market intelligence and facilitate managers to identify potential new markets at the earliest possible opportunity, (see Gathering intelligence and crystal ball gazing: p. 105).

The managers also develop methods of ensuring they stay abreast of developments in their field as a means of maintaining their social capital to the same end. Research managers employ similar methods to develop networks with the research community, enabling engagement in collaborative projects and raising awareness of potential funding opportunities. Similarly, human and social capital is shown to play a central role in the internal dynamics used to ensure collaboration across the managerial team. The findings also identify social capital as central to managerial practice ensuring effective relationships with those they manage (see Charming the pants off them: p. 107). This accords with the findings of Bolden et al (2012) who highlight the importance of "a perceived emotional and intellectual connection between academic leaders and those they influence" (p. 43). Organisational capital is exercised to facilitate these actors to navigate internal faculty and university systems for the benefit of exploration and exploitation. Thus, human capital emerges as a managerial imperative in this case demonstrating that organisations seeking to adopt contextual ambidexterity should focus on ensuring that academic managers are supported to develop and enhance their interpersonal skills and professional networks where possible.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter illustrates how those tasked with managing professional healthcare education have derived valuable lessons from their experiences of ambidexterity which find resonance within the existing literature where ambidextrous tensions and tactics epitomise the managerial experience. This study also makes several unique contributions to our understanding of ambidexterity in an educational context, including; the conceptualisation of exploration and exploitation along a continuum, the identification of context specific ambidextrous tensions including the 'competition versus collaboration' dichotomy within the educational marketplace; and a distortion of the traditional business model as a consequence of the consumer sovereignty bestowed upon practice providers in this professional context. Social capital emerges as a key enabler of contextual ambidexterity. Structural and cultural organisational barriers impede ambidexterity in multiple ways including hampering explorative endeavours from moving along the continuum into the exploitative domain. Exploration is shown to leave a legacy that implies a limitation of temporal ambidexterity in an educational organisational context. This new knowledge offers an insight into the way in which the complexity of the landscape and organisational architecture detracts from positive risk-taking and distorts ambidextrous practices. Yet, taken together, the findings from this case study also depict an organisation and the managerial team incrementally adapting its cultures, systems, practices and capabilities in response to a changing educational and professional landscape.

The following chapter will draw the findings together to offer a conceptual model of ambidexterity in healthcare education and make recommendations to support educational organisations wishing to profit from its potential gift.

6 Chapter 6 - Conclusions, contributions and recommendations

This concluding chapter will consider the unique contribution the findings make to the existing field of knowledge and critically reflect on the research process before offering recommendations for future practice and research.

6.1 Contribution

Ambidexterity proved an effective lens through which to explore the lived reality of managerial practice in this case, affording findings which extend our understanding of the way in which it finds form in this organisational context. Figure 29 (p. 138), offers an adapted version of Hughes' (2018) model of ambidexterity incorporating six amendments which emerge from the findings of this case study to offer a conceptual model of managers of professional healthcare educations' experiences of ambidexterity.

The findings confirm the dominant proposition in the organisational theory literature which contends that exploration and exploitation compete for scarce organisational resources. Here the two modes of operation are shown to draw on shared, finite resources and a lack of investment amplifies the deleterious impact exploration has on exploitation. While it is fitting that exploitation is the dominant mode of operation for this educational organisation and is privileged in organisational systems and processes, this in turn has the effect of impeding exploration. As such, the two modes of operation compete against each other inspiring multiple tensions within this professional terrain.

Akin to the wider body of evidence social capital surfaces as a key tactic employed across exploitative and explorative paradigms. The managers actively strive to develop and build upon their social capital with multiple stakeholders. This tactic finds utility as a method of proffering explorative and

exploitative benefits, engendering the support needed to balance the competing demands on managers time and ameliorating some of the ambidextrous tensions arising in practice.

The findings also identify four unique contributions which extend our current understanding and uncover the way in which ambidexterity is experienced by managers of professional healthcare education.

1. Whist laying no claim to generalisability the findings contribute to the academic debate regarding the conceptualisation of exploitation and exploration. In keeping with the wider literature contextual ambidexterity is found to be an integral part of professional managerial practice where exploitation is understood to involve endeavours aimed at enhancing existing capabilities and exploration is focused on the ability to create and develop new knowledge and opportunities (March, 1991). However, the orthogonal relationship between the two is challenged here. Exploitative activities are clearly defined at one end of the continuum whilst exploration is positioned along the continuum dependent upon the extent to which it calls on new capabilities, structures, systems etc. Thus, highly diverse ventures which draw on new knowledge and capabilities are situated the furthest away from exploitation while new business which draws on some existing capabilities, structures and systems is positioned along the continuum between the two poles.

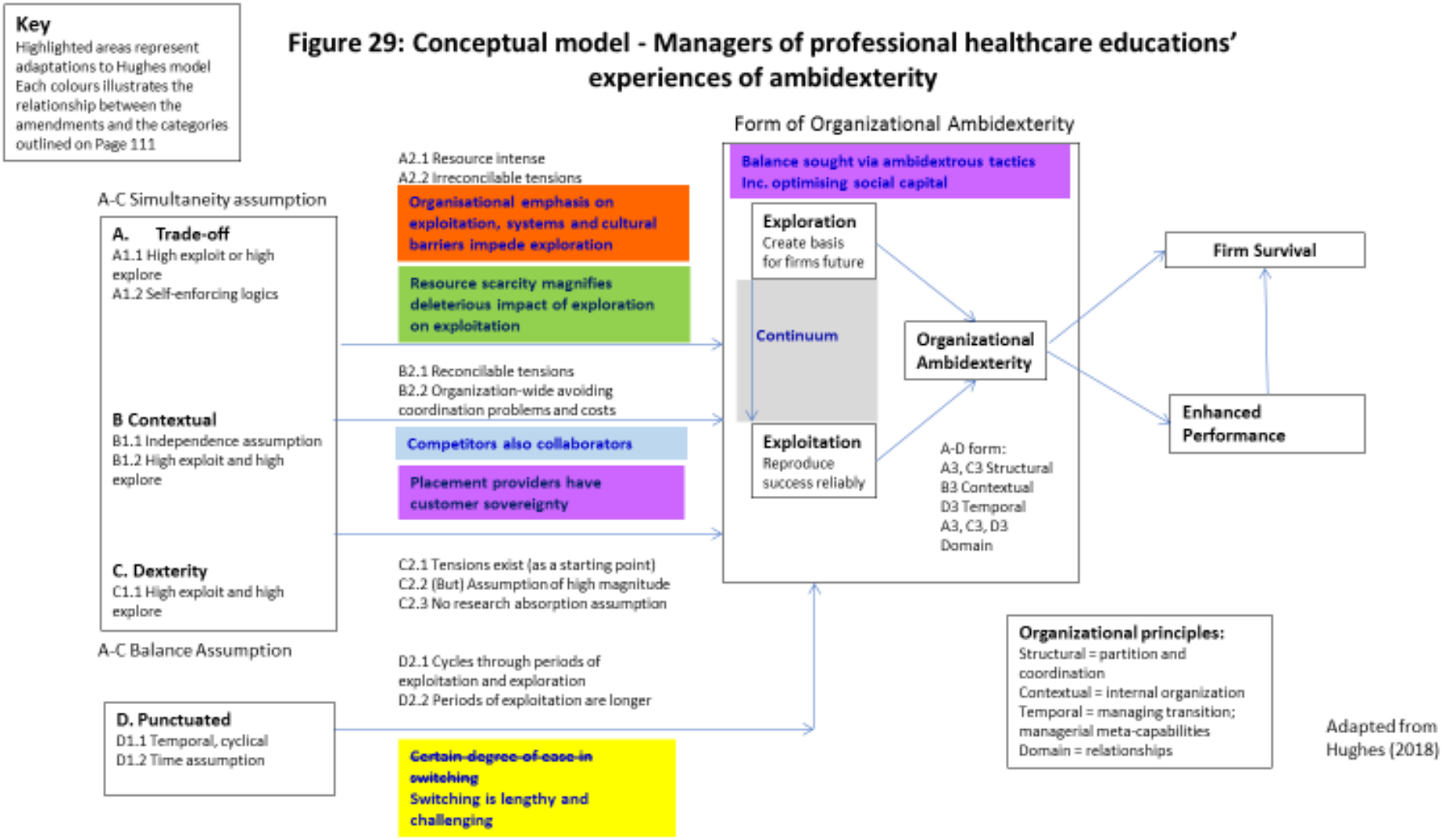
2. Although many of the ambidextrous tensions to surface in this case are reflective of those found in the wider literature, some are specific to the milieu of healthcare education. The discourse which considers the marketisation of Higher Education draws on a market rationality which positions educational providers as competitors, educational programmes as the principle commodity and students the primary customer. Yet, this study makes a unique contribution in identifying the advent of a much more multifaceted marketplace in professional healthcare education. Most notable is the perception of other Higher Education providers as both competitors and collaborators.

Managers in this case evidenced an acute awareness of the hypercomptetion in healthcare education, as a result of the marketisation process. Local Higher Education providers are predominantly positioned in the role of key competitors. The development of social capital, with healthcare providers, is depicted as a central means of gaining a competitive advantage as it secures, and potentially extends, the availability of experiential learning placements and as such the capacity to recruit healthcare students. As such the faculties existing placement circuit and established relationships with stakeholders are portrayed as the frontline in the battle to compete in the emerging marketplace. Yet, health service providers also demand a high degree of uniformity in the systems, processes and governance mechanisms used by the various Higher Educational establishments across the region. Further, the former commissioning framework has left a legacy of shared databases and process which would be extremely expensive for a single organisation to replace much less maintain. This calls for collaboration amongst local educational providers. This enthuses a dichotomy in the relationships between local educational providers who need to balance a competitive and collaborative stance with local contemporaries.

3. As alluded to above the structure of the educational marketplace in healthcare bequeaths service providers with consumer sovereignty as a product of their gatekeeping position over the experiential learning placements. The healthcare provider organisations which offer student placements also commonly look to commission educational programmes and projects as a means of developing their existing workforce. The emerging marketplace in healthcare education has situated these organisations in a powerful negotiating position with local educational providers whose business model is dependent upon accessing their workplaces. Thus, the inherent complexity of this marketplace has a fundamental influence on the ambidextrous decision-making process. Managers balance the need to utilise their limited resources to best effect with the potential risk of turning away new business and damaging strategically important relationships with key stakeholders or providing an opportunity for a

competitor to advance their relationships with the service provider organisation. This has a fundamental influence on the managerial practice of these actors and amplifies the importance of the ambidextrous tactic of building social capital with external stakeholders.

4. Temporal ambidexterity is also in evidence in this case. However, education is shown to be an inflexible commodity, housed within rigid university systems, which renders movement between exploration and exploitation inherently challenging and time-consuming. In this case, the consequence of this is described as a "temporal ripple" which sees the impact of a period of proactive market orientated exploration endure despite a strategic switch in favour of an exploitative priority. The strategic decision to protect the core business by focusing on the exploitative aspects of faculty are hindered by the lengthy retraction process during which time explorative activities continue to draw on scarce resources posing a potential threat to exploitation. Thus, Hughes (2018) contention that there is a certain degree of ease in switching between exploration and exploitation is rejected. Moreover, this is exacerbated by the importance of developing and maintaining relationships with healthcare providers (as discussed in point 3) which necessitates a responsive market orientation. This, in turn, limits the faculties ability to focus purely on exploitation as they are compelled to respond to requests to develop new business with their existing customer base. Thus, the business unit at the centre of this case continue to engage in exploration.


Key
Highlighted areas represent adaptations to Hughes model
Each colours illustrates the relationship between the amendments and the categories outlined on Page 111
Figure 29: Conceptual model - Managers of professional healthcare educations' experiences of ambidexterity
Form of Organizational Ambidexterity
A-C Simultaneity assumption
A. Trade-off
A1.1 High exploit or high explore
A1.2 Self-enforcing logics
B Contextual
B1.1 Independence assumption
B1.2 High exploit and high explore
C. Dexterity
C1.1 High exploit and high explore
A-C Balance Assumption
D. Punctuated
D1.1 Temporal, cyclical
D1.2 Time assumption
A2.1 Resource intense
A2.2 Irreconcilable tensions
Organisational emphasis on exploitation, systems and cultural barriers impede exploration
Resource scarcity magnifies deleterious impact of exploration on exploitation
B2.1 Reconcilable tensions
B2.2 Organization-wide avoiding coordination problems and costs
Competitors also collaborators
Placement providers have customer sovereignty
C2.1 Tensions exist (as a starting point)
C2.2 (But) Assumption of high magnitude
C2.3 No research absorption assumption
D2.1 Cycles through periods of exploitation and exploration
D2.2 Periods of exploitation are longer
~~Certain degree of ease in switching~~
Switching is lengthy and challenging
Balance sought via ambidextrous tactics Inc. optimising social capital
Exploration
Create basis for firms future
Continuum
Exploitation
Reproduce success reliably
Organizational Ambidexterity
A-D form:
A3, C3 Structural
B3 Contextual
D3 Temporal
A3, C3, D3
Domain
Firm Survival
Enhanced Performance
Organizational principles:
Structural = partition and coordination
Contextual = internal organization
Temporal = managing transition; managerial meta-capabilities
Domain = relationships
Adapted from Hughes (2018)

6.2 Methodological reflections

An evaluation of this study would not be complete without reflecting upon the efficacy of the methodology employed. The rich data acquired stands testament to the legitimacy of the research question and design; yet my positionality, as both the researcher and the researched, surfaces as a central focus of my reflective deliberation (see Appendix F). In common with many practitioner-researchers I benefited considerably from my proximity to the field of study, in terms of accessing, understanding and interpreting the data (Greene, 2014; Usluer, 2012). Furthermore, many of the potential pitfalls of insider research, such as researcher bias and a lack of subjectivity (Greene, 2014), were curtailed by a combination of design and good fortune. The potential for bias in the selection of interviewees was moderated by the recruitment of all members of the managerial team, achieved in part by having a population who hold research in high regard and have a vested interest in the changing landscape of healthcare education. Moreover, my ability to maintain a level of objectivity, posited as crucial to the insider researcher (Unluer, 2012), was facilitated by the fact that I took up a managerial position and moved along the outsider-insider continuum (Mercer, 2007) at the optimum time, enabling me to enter the group as a new member shortly before the data was collected. Yet, while my position as a member of the managerial team allowed me to immerse myself in the field of study this also inspired a degree of frustration, as I regularly found myself engaged in meetings and conversations which were of relevance to my empirical work. In keeping with the ontological and epistemological position of this study, these experiences enriched my understanding and will have influenced the co-constructed findings; however, they also represent a missed opportunity to enrichen the dataset. On reflection the insider position of the researcher could have been optimised by explicitly incorporating participant observation as an additional data collection method, as advocated by Takyi (2015).

By laying bare the complex landscape of professional healthcare education this case study casts light on the subjugating role of the state, as both the architect and conductor of the market, which

diminishes the emancipatory potential of the corporate realm and inspires distortions in the emerging business model. Thus, while there is no linear developmental pathway or blueprint to underpin the advancement towards organisational ambidexterity in healthcare educational management, the findings do elucidate some strategic steps that may prove beneficial to those entrenched in this complex transformational process.

6.3 Recommendations

The empirical insights afforded by this case study have the potential to be advantageous at multiple levels of the organisation. Further, the thick description of the context, methodology and findings facilitate transferability across the sector and identify fertile ground for further study.

6.3.1 Recommendations for practice

Whilst it is evident that the University considered here has begun to evolve systems and processes that align with the proliferating marketisation agenda, the findings of this study clearly support a recommendation to expedite this process not only to survive but also to thrive in new world order. The ambidextrous tensions that emerged in this study indicate that attention should be afforded to the efficacy of embedding further structural ambidexterity, with mechanisms for integration, at the macro-level of the organisational structure and investment should be directed towards organisational systems and processes which support ambidexterity. Specifically, there is a need for prospective workload management systems capable of conveying the relationship between workforce demands and available resources, responsive recruitment and capability management systems, greater financial autonomy for those required to enact contextual ambidexterity and the development of flexible staffing models to facilitate both a proactive and responsive market orientation. Organisations wishing to confer the full gift of ambidextrous practice also need to ensure that their financial model creates leeway for exploration. Furthermore, the organisation should seek to develop a culture which

supports contextual ambidexterity by combining elements of a knowledge-sharing and empowering culture, incorporating a clear strategic vision, effective channels of communication and educational preparation for the workforce as well as affording sufficient autonomy and discretionary slack to those required to exercise contextual ambidexterity.

Higher Education establishments commonly employ personnel with extensive business experience and as such could draw on this resource to support managerial staff who are new to a marketized system, perhaps by embedding models of cross-faculty coaching or supervision.

Similarly, the organisational structure at the business unit level warrants consideration to determine whether it would be beneficial to strengthen the lines of responsibility and accountability of the managerial team, thus circumventing some of the ambidextrous tensions that emerge as a product of the current matrix management system. This study also highlighted the importance of shared strategic decision-making, which indicated that a forum at which exploration and exploitation can be debated, discussed and decided upon is also a prerequisite to contextual ambidexterity in this context. Moreover, risk assessment tools may prove efficacious in enabling managers to optimise the potential for exploration to facilitate rather than frustrate exploitation. The findings of this study supported the development of a draft risk assessment tool (see Appendix D). This aims to prompt manager considering potential explorative endeavours to consider the factors which emerged in the findings of this case study. However cognisant of the danger of adding to the bureaucracy endemic across the academy a memory aid, such as a pneumonic, may prove a more feasible decision-making tool. The findings from this study indicate that consideration should be afforded to five R's. Firstly, a cost-benefit analysis should consider the income generation potential, **Revenue**, and the **Resources** required. Whilst most large organisations will have detailed mechanisms for calculating exact costings for programmes and projects, in the initial stages this could take the form of a basic calculation in relation to the amount of income generated relative to the key resource of staff time plus related

travel and any hardware e.g. clinical equipment. In addition, considerations should be afforded to the impact any new venture may have either positively or negatively in terms of **Relationships**.

The findings from this case study clearly position relationships with healthcare providers as fundamental to exploration and exploitation and as such the potential for new business to develop social capital or to damage these relationships should be a central element of the decision-making process. Further, in this case study the faculty is shown to be engaged in a complex competitive and collaborative relationship with other local HEI's. This necessitates thought regarding the potential impact that any new business will have on these relationships, for example it would be useful to consider whether a new area of engagement may be perceived as an aggressive move and if so, what the possible ramifications may be.

The potential for exploration to pose a **Risk** to the quality of existing exploitative endeavours should be considered. This may require some deliberation regarding the best means of balancing the available resources across the exploitative and explorative aspects of engagement and should be aligned with the strategic priorities of the whole business unit rather than any a single department. The possible risk of a local competitor meeting the gap in the market and building their social capital with the customer base also warrants attention. It is also recommended that Faculties of healthcare consider the potential for reputational risk cognisance of the fundamental values and beliefs of this professional arena. Lastly the evidence indicates that the **Retraction** process for educational programmes and projects can be lengthy and labour intensive and as such managers should consider this at the earliest opportunity.

The findings also support a recommendation for managers to continue to build upon and exploit their human capital as a means of staying abreast of developments in the field and competitor behaviours, as well as establishing secure relationships with those gatekeepers who have it in their gift to support or hinder the business of the faculty. Given the pervasive resource scarcity across the academy, managers should also strive to derive exploitative gains from explorative endeavours and vice versa.

6.3.2 Recommendations for further research

There is compelling evidence of the value of ambidexterity in the corporate realm and this study indicates that the academy may have much to gain by attending to the utility of this concept, lending weight to the calls for further empirical attention in this field. In particular, there is a gap in our understanding of the relationship between ambidexterity at the macro-level and micro-level of the university, the efficacy of structures and systems to support ambidexterity and the effect of discretionary slack on the ambidextrous capabilities of managerial staff. This study also tentatively inferred a degree of heterogeneity in academic managers' psychological tendencies towards exploration and exploitation, which warrants further investigation.

The findings from this study also highlight the necessity to turn our empirical gaze to the marketisation of healthcare education to explore its impact on student behaviour, recruitment, retention, progression and experience as well as its influence on the dynamics between the various actors in this ever-changing professional area. Of particular value would be research that explores the healthcare service providers perspective of engaging with the educational marketplace and studies which advance our understanding of the optimal means by which to manage a simultaneously competitive and collegiate stance with contemporaries. There is also a deficit of studies which attend to the student perspective. Future research in this area is of vital importance given its potential to advance our understanding of the student's perceptions of the commodification of healthcare education and their role as customers in the educational marketplace.

6.4 Conclusion

It has been a great a privilege to conduct this research study which has enabled me to make sense of the opportunities and challenges I encounter in my everyday practice and has equipped me with an understanding of my professional field, which I feel certain will prove invaluable as we herald the naissance of the marketisation of healthcare education. Moreover, this case study has realised its aspiration to explore the lived experience of academic managers of professional healthcare education during a period of disquieting turmoil, uncovered context specific ambidextrous tensions and practices emerging as a means of managing in the crossfire of dual expectations. This has enabled me to advance a range of recommendations for both individuals and organisations which fit the temper of our time.

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8 Appendices

8.1 Appendix A: **Participant information sheet**

Participant information sheet - Tussles with ambidexterity: The case of managers of health professional education.

You are being invited to take part in a doctoral study. Before you decide whether you want to participate it is important for you to understand why the study is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Feel free to contact me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

What is the purpose of the study?

This doctoral study will explore the lived experience of managers of academic faculty concerned with the professional education of the health care workforce in the UK and will investigate how these individuals manage the dual imperatives of maintaining and enhancing current capabilities whilst simultaneously adopting a future orientation to develop new ones. A case study methodology will be utilised with semi structured interviews being one of the methods of data collection.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen because it is anticipated that, in your role as a manager of health professional education, you will have experience in dealing with the topic of this study.

Do I have to take part?

NO, there is no pressure or obligation on you to take part – it is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

What will happen if I take part?

Should you agree to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. You will then be contacted by a researcher from the Chester Business School who will outline the aims and objectives of the study and answer any questions you may have. An interview will then be scheduled at a date and location of your convenience. The interview is expected to last approximately 40-60 minutes and will be audio taped.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

We are not aware of any disadvantages or risks of participating in this study. However, if you wish to complain or have any concerns about any aspect of the way you have been treated during this study the normal grievance policy is open to you and all correspondence should be addressed to Professor Clare Schofield, Chair of Faculty Research & Knowledge Transfer Committee, Faculty of Business & Management, University of Chester, United Kingdom, Chester CH1 4BJ, +44 (0)1244 511000 or c.schofield@chester.ac.uk

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

Taking part will provide you with the opportunity to share your experiences of working as a manager of health professional education and it is anticipated that you may derive some benefits from the opportunity to reflect on your experiences.

Will my taking part be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you during the research will be kept strictly confidential and only the researcher will have access to this data.

Participants should note that data collected from this project may be retained and published in an anonymised form. By agreeing to participate in this project, you are consenting to the retention and publication of data.

What will happen to the results of the study?

The audio data of the interviews will be analysed along with secondary data relating to your organisation and the final report will be disseminated via conferences and academic publications. Individuals who participate will not be identified in any report or publication.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The research forms the thesis of the researchers Professional Doctorate and has not received any funding.

Who may I contact for further information?

If you would like more information about the research before you decide whether you would be willing to take part, please contact;

Eve Collins,

(e.collins@chester.ac.uk 01244 512271)

Thank you for your interest in this research study.

8.2 Appendix B: Consent form

Consent form

Title of Project: Tussles with ambidexterity: The case of managers of health professional education

Name of Researchers: Eve Collins, Student DProf Professional Education

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to contact the researcher to ask questions. ☐

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason and without prejudice. ☐

3. I understand that the interview will be audiotaped ☐

4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature

_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

8.3 Appendix C: Interview guide

Interview Guide

Research questions:

How is ambidexterity experienced by managers of health professional education?'

Further sub-research questions are as follows;
Sub-RQ1: 'How are exploitation and exploration experienced, at management level, in professional health education?'
Sub-RQ2: 'What tensions arise in the pursuit of ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?'
Sub – RQ3: 'What are the enablers and barriers to ambidexterity for managers of health professional education?'

1. **Can you tell me about your work?**

2. **Can you tell me about the sorts of work you do which is about "improving what you already have in place"?**

   This question is designed to address objective 1 (see page 20) by eliciting discussion regarding the participants experience of exploitation and is designed to reflect March's (1991) definition.

3. **Can you tell me about the sorts of work you do which is about "developing or investing in new things"?**

   This question is designed to address objective 1 (see page 20) by eliciting to elicit discussion regarding the participants experience of exploration and is designed to reflect March's (1991) definition.

4. **Can you tell me about a time when you had to deal with both improving what you already have in place and developing new things?**

   This question will facilitate an exploration of the participants experiences of ambidexterity (balancing exploration and exploitation) and address objectives 1 and 2.

   Prompt/probes

   What have you found to be the challenges in your work?

   What have you found to be the tensions in your work? (or – so X was a tension?) how are they resolved?

   What have you found to be the enablers in your work? (or – so X was an enabler?)

What have you found to be the barriers in your work? (or – so X was a barrier?) how are they overcome?

What seems to be driving that aspect of that?

The literature depicts ambidexterity as the cause of multiple tensions (Berghman, 2012; Danson & Kierulf, 2016; Raish et al, 2009) and this objective aims to explore the managers experience of these. There is also a growing evidence base which indicates that managers develop ambidextrous capabilities (Jansen et al, 2008, 2009, 2012; Andriopolous & Lewis, 2009; Turner et al 2016) as a means of managing these tensions and the prompts aim to generate a rich discussion regarding the factors which facilitated this in this case, (Objectives 1,2 & 3).

5. **How do you see your work changing in the future?**

Prompt/probes
Will this require new competencies and if so how will they be developed?

Will this require new support structures and if so what and are they being developed?

This question is intended to explore the participants perceptions of the utility of ambidexterity in Higher education and the structures systems and competencies this may require (Objective 1, 2, 3) to add to the current evidence regarding the development of ambidexterity in this sector (Stokes et al, 2017 Nguyen et al, 2016; Coleman, 2016; Tahar et al, 2011; Fatemah et al, 2014)

8.4 Appendix D: Risk assessment document for exploration

Proposal to develop new business, programme or make a major modification to an existing programme.

This form must be completed for discussion at Faculty Management Group before detailed development work can proceed

1. WHAT IS BEING PROPOSED?

Proposed new business	
Host Department	
Proposed Programme/ Project Leader	
Other Faculties, Departments and/or collaborating organisations contributing to the proposal *(if appropriate)*	
Proposed location(s) for programme/ project delivery	
Proposed date(s) for programme/ project delivery	
Please provide a brief outline of the proposal	

2. DEMAND FOR THE DEVLOPEMENT

Provide detail regarding the target market below. (include details re all stakeholders, potential students, commissioners, employers etc.)

3. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Outline the income generational potential of the proposal. (Provide detail regarding the funding stream and the time in which the income will be generated)

What resources will be required and when? (consider hardware, central costs and staffing)

4. POTENTIAL TO IMPACT ON EXISTING PROVISION

What is the potential impact on the quality of existing provision and how do you propose to minimise this?
What is the potential impact of this project/programme on our reputation and our relationships with external stakeholders? (local employers and local competitors)
*What is the potential impact of **NOT** pursuing this development?*

5. RETRACTION PROCESS

Outline the process for managing a withdrawal from this venture (consider the time-scale required and outline the role of external parties e.g. if a collaborative partnership is involved how would we meet our obligations during the teach out phase)

8.1 Appendix E: Illustration of data coding

Excerpt 1

The following data extract incorporates a discussion regarding the theme entitled temporal ripple where the participant is discussing their experience of exploration in the past and a recent change in strategic direction.

Interviewer: Right, OK. So, thinking of forward direction, were there times when you we're developing or investing in new things and what's your experience of that?

Code: Past tense

Participant: Yes, there was, and my experience was erm…that things were haphazard. So, cause you said about departments and the faculty, haphazard er…some things were gone for without any real awareness of er…you know, what's the business reasoning for this, how much money will we bring, what are the resource implications? So it was quite often opportunistic, you know, a conversation with a conversation with somebody who'd had a conversation with somebody, and they'd said that might be a good idea erm…and you go for it and then…see if I think about the (PROGRAME NAME) one, that…that almost took on a life of its own without anybody at…certainly near the start…at the start, without anybody going, is this a good idea? I'm including myself in that, you know, I was…I was leading it because you…it's, you know, there's…somebody flashes a bit of money at you and says oh we've got forty grand or something, you could do(PROGRAME NAME), you think oh god, forty grand, the fact that we've got no (SPECIALTY) expertise, you know, we've got one person… that was never…I'll hold my hands up at this, at the start I never sat down and thought about that, I just thought that's an opportunity isn't it, forty grand? Yeah, we could do that. Like a wing and a prayer, just opportunistic, haphazard. We always seem to get through it but then under what cost, sometimes. OK the new heads of department would (laughs) know what cost.

Code: Diversification

Category: On a wing and a prayer

Interviewer: So, if we take that example, why at that point in time were you seeking to pursue that area of business do you think?

Participant: I think if I'm entirely honest, I was a new head of department and er… was aware of other heads of department doing stuff like that. So, if you're bringing a bit of money in, always talk about how much money they've got and do this and that and thinking that's…that's the business, that's what you have to do and I…I hadn't had any preparation of business, finance or anything like that. So, you know, it was a keenness to be seen as, yeah, of get in there and do that cause that's what's expected at the moment. I think that shifted a bit but at the time, as a new head, it was about proving yourself and me proving myself.

Code: Lack of Business savvy

Code: Present tense

Category: Hidden hierarchy

Interviewer: How's it shifted a bit?

Participant: Currently, I think… I think we are maybe less inclined about new business and more inclined to think about quality assurance issues. I think the brakes have been put on a little bit but in a reactive way, again.

Category: Putting the brakes on

Code: Changing external landscape

Interviewer: *Why do* you think that's happened? What's…led to that?

Participant: I think there's obviously external stuff that's gone on with the comprehensive spending review and we stopped to think about what's our core provision, and let's make sure that's OK, we had to make sure that's stable erm… and I think we've had issues around quality, basic fundamental quality maybe has… hasn't been as good while we've been out looking for lots of disparate business opportunities. I don't know.

Category: Lessons learnt

Excerpt 2

This excerpt includes a discussion regarding some of the tensions which emerge in the pursuit of ambidexterity and illustrates their multifaceted nature in the experience of this participant.

Category: Hidden hierarchy

Participant: So, from a department point of view, which is really is my main concern, my main job, I take a very much a developmental role. I tend to, I sit down with my deputy head and we work out very clear yeah roles for each other, KPI's key performance indicators so that [NAME] would know when she's done a good job and I would know when I'd done a good job, or when I'd done sufficient to may be what I know I should have done. Because it always is a case of robbing Peter to pay Paul with time. Now that was quite useful because when we sat down if I wasn't careful [NAME] 's role would all be operational and mine would all be externally facing. When you look at the job descriptions that what it would suggest in my interpretation, but the reality is that would make [NAME]'s job absolutely turgid and all she'd be doing is firefighting everyday covering sickness, covering leave and so forth and my job would be this external facing role whereby I'm out there you know almost like acquiring new business erm a bit like an account manager in financing your keeping people happy, you know and making sure that we're responding to Directors of Nursing and Heads of education's agendas and so forth, which is all a great job and a needed job but at the same time if I focus too much on that Rome could be burning behind me.

Code: Emotive language/ psychological preferences

Category: The Balancing Act

Interviewer: Oh right

Participant: You know because you tend to lose touch you know with your basic grade lecturer, practitioner is just run absolutely raged trying to mark and teach and then hasn't got the second teacher when all that comes into it so you have to keep a handle on that as well. So as far, to go back to your question about maintaining the quality, how I do it is by good use of my deputy, clear distinction about what we do with the roles and balancing some of that some of the nicer external work that I have and making sure [NAME] gets that and I take some of what [NAME] finds quiet challenging on a day to day basis because otherwise she doesn't develop and I'll lose her but also I'll lose touch with what's happening at grass roots level within the department and the staff don't see me so I try to balance those.

Category: Rome could be burning behind me

Interviewer: Ok so there were a few things that you said there that can we just explore a little bit why you'd think the external, why you would describe the external facing things as nicer? What is it about that that makes that?

Code: Emotive language/ psychological preferences

Participant: Its more strategic and I think erm that it, it gives you head space. It, I really enjoy that, I suppose it's an enjoyment thing as well. I really like going in to err, as we did recently with one of the Directors of Nursing, going in and taping into what is their agenda, which parts of what our provision, what I can provide in the department float their boat and which don't. Erm so for example we went to have a word with somebody in (LOCATION) who just do not use (ORGANISATION) for (PROGRAME). They'll always go to (LOCAL HEI) even though, and I know their closer to (LOCAL HEI), even though they're the chair of a (LOCATION) region wide group, they were favouring (LOCAL HEI). When I went in, I found out that because of the way our curriculum is structured for that particular program and it always comes down to certain individuals erm who are teaching on that program that they didn't have much faith in. Now it's certain individuals you have to back that and actually when I got to the bottom of that it was old adage from years ago. The curriculum was a very good point though, so we ended up then sitting down and turning a negative into a positive and that's the bit I really like that's the enjoyable bit. I was able to say "Ok if that's the issue", and I literally got hold of a whiteboard and said "do you mind?" and we worked out what it is we were gonna do and now were doing that and she's now moved her contract from (LOCAL HEI) to ourselves.

Code: Relationship with stakeholders

8.2 Appendix F: Excerpts from reflective journal

The following three excerpts illustrate the reflective nature of this case study.

1)The first is a reflection which was written in the early stages of the data collection process immediately after an interview. It captures the point at which I was grappling with my position as an insider researcher and considering whether it would be appropriate to distance myself from the data collection process.

"Todays interview has left me thinking about how much clarification I need to ask people for. I've just listened to (NAME's) interview and it struck me that she talks to me with the assumption that I already know a lot about the faculty. She mentioned the recent NMC review and the fact that they wanted evidence of level 4 external review even though the university didn't need it but she just said something like "that level 4 issue" and instead of asking her to explain it I just said "oh yeah" and let her move on to make her point. Now as I listen back it worries me that no one else would know what she meant and maybe it was poor interview skills not to ask her to explain. The literature on interviews doesn't seem to say anything about this but I suspect it will happen a lot so I need to think about what is should do for the rest of the interviews. If I start asking for details about everything it will feel false and could waste a lot of time, I also think this could annoy people because they will know I understand them. It makes me reflect on how integral I am to the data and I guess that's what they mean when they talk about insiders having a shared understanding of the field. The more I think about the more I wonder if I should just go with it accept, I'm in their kind of thing"

This triggered a period of reflection which I now recognise was concerned with my epistemological position. Further reflection and reading enabled me to reaffirm my belief in the centrality of the researcher in interpretative research and I concluded that the data would be strengthened if I embraced this both during data collection and analysis.

2)The second reflective extract illustrates another challenge of insider research and the blurred boundaries between my role as an insider researcher and a manager. This was documented towards the end of the data collection period in the early stages of analysis and is one of many extracts in which I reflect on something which has happened during my working day which resonated with my data I was collecting.

"Today's workload meeting got really heated, I found myself sitting there and thinking well this is one of the main tensions people keep talking about in the interviews. (NAME) wanted to pull some staff off the pre-reg programme to work on the (PROJECT NAME) and (NAME) was not happy. It went back

and forth as usual and then eventually moved when someone questioned what the priorities for the faculty actually are. This led to people discussing their individual priorities and it seemed that the various members of the team had different views about the priority and also that there may be faculty and departmental priorities. In the end the whole team agreed that it has to be pre-reg as this is the central source of income. So, the only way (NAME) can have people to do the exploratory stuff is if she can make sure the pre-reg programme won't suffer. Reflecting on this has made me consider how or if the participants perceive their priorities in the data, which in turn leads me to question what part my work was having on my analysis of the data. Sometimes it feels like every day is a form of analysis in action just by being at work"

3)The final extract from my reflective diary is one of the last and was written during the final write up phase of the study. It relates to an occasion when I was helping a colleague to consider whether to take on an exploratory project and it helped confirm the utility of the findings for managerial practice.

"It was really exciting today, (NAME) and (NAME) came over to see me and asked if I could help talk through a decision about doing (PROJECT NAME) for (LOCAL ORGANISATION NAME). They'd been asked to take on the work at really short notice and (NAME) said that some of the other Heads didn't seem keen because we're meant to be focusing on core provision now. (NAME) was worried because she just felt that it hadn't been thought through, so she wanted to talk it over with me. I was made up to be honest because I have been working on this 5 R's idea and it meant I could test it out. I kept the 5 R's in my head because I didn't want (NAME) to think I was nuts, but we started to talk each one over and it really worked. It didn't change the fact that the money isn't in it and it'll be a pain to staff but it did help clarify that it's important for our work with the trust and that we could give (LOCAL COMPETITOR) an in road if we never took it on, also the potential profit would be good in the long run. It isn't like it came up with anything new or even that it changed her mind about anything, but it really seemed to help clarify the pros and cons so that she could decide what she thought the right decision was and more importantly make a case for it at FMG on Friday. (NAME) also worked out a way to overcome the staffing issue so she has a clear case to present the team and hopefully will avoid the usual problem of over stretching the staff as well. I was thrilled because it really made me think the findings may help clear the fog a little and help us consider all our options properly in future"